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# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 9 December 2003

Mardi 9 décembre 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 December 2003

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### ALGONQUIN AUTOMOTIVE

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I rise in the House today to recognize Algonquin Automotive. This Huntsville company has been noted as a national role model for innovation in Canada. Algonquin Automotive was acknowledged by the National Research Council as one of Canada's innovation leaders by demonstrating an entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to innovation.

Major automobile manufacturers take credit for producing vehicles, but it is smaller companies like Algonquin Automotive that define the details. Items such as running boards, spoilers, cladding and grille guards are both functional and attractive, and these products must be well designed and well built. Algonquin Automotive has turned 35 years of experience into highly prized products, regularly filing patents on their work.

The company currently employs about 300 people in plants situated in Huntsville, Bracebridge and Gravenhurst in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. Algonquin's business has expanded dramatically in the past 10 years, from \$7 million in annual sales to more than \$60 million in 2002, and such growth is continuing.

This fall, Algonquin began work on a chrome tubular step for GM's Hummer H2, a version dedicated to rough off-road driving. The contract is one of four that are expected to generate an additional 50 jobs at Algonquin, and perhaps even more, with the company's many suppliers across Ontario.

Algonquin Automotive is a valuable community partner, and I am very happy that they have been recognized for their commitment to innovation and quality. I would like to personally congratulate Jim and Rob Alexander and the staff at Algonquin Automotive.

#### FAIRBANK COMMUNITY

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** Mr Speaker, I would like to share with you and the House an incredible example of community spirit and caring which took place last weekend in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence in the heart of Toronto.

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 décembre 2003

This past Saturday, December 6, the Fairbank community held its annual Christmas dinner for children and seniors, in partnership with the Eglinton Community Initiative and the Eglinton BIA. Over 500 people attended the event at the British Methodist Episcopal Church, in the heart of my riding. I have to tell you that it was an incredible sight to behold. There was music mixed with good food, good cheer and even a visit by Santa. Young and old were included in the celebration. It brought out the best in all of us, with a holiday spirit that was truly amazing.

I'm proud to stand here today and represent the thoughtful people of the Eglinton-Lawrence community. I would like to extend special thanks to Staff Inspector Glenn Decaire and PC Ojo Tewogbade of 13 Division for organizing the event; the Right Reverend Maurice Hicks, pastor of the British Methodist Episcopal Church; the president of the York-Eglinton Business Improvement Area, Arnold Rowe; the chair of the Eglinton Community Initiative, Andrea De Vaille; Dempster's Bread; and Tony and Teresa's No Frills. These are people who really put the Christmas back where it belongs: in the community. It's a community of sharing and generosity, and not a community of taking. We've got to put the giving and sharing back into Christmas.

#### POWER INTERRUPTION

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** On November 28, much of my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke was hit with a major winter storm, causing widespread power outages and leaving some residents without power in freezing temperatures for up to 72 hours. This was the second extensive power interruption in a two-week period. This latest situation saw many trees downed because of snow load.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the patience and resilience of my constituents in the face of this hardship. I also want to thank the volunteer firefighters of the township of South Algonquin for their selfless efforts in seeing that residents, particularly seniors and shut-ins, were secure and had fresh water and heat. The township also set up an emergency shelter if people needed to be moved. I also want to thank members of the Killaloe-Whitney detachment of the OPP for their assistance and the township council for their help as well. This is an example of how people in rural Ontario pitch in during times of crisis to ensure the safety of their neighbours. Rural Ontarians work together.



I would like to see this new Liberal government recognize the importance of our rural communities. So far, they have not acknowledged their significance to the province. More than one third of their cabinet ministers are from Toronto, and there was absolutely no mention of rural Ontario in the throne speech.

#### RIDING OF OTTAWA-ORLÉANS

**Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans):** I welcome my first opportunity to speak in this historic chamber as the MPP for Ottawa-Orléans. First of all, I would like to thank the good people of the riding for electing me and giving me the honour of representing the constituency, which, under new boundaries, will simply be known as Orléans.

As a high school student, I knew Orléans as a small francophone village on the Ottawa River, some 12 kilometres from downtown Ottawa. Today, its population approaches 80,000 people and encompasses all or part of the five wards of the new city of Ottawa—20% of the city of Ottawa, the eastern part. I am proud to represent this mainly urban riding, comprised of one third francophones and 15% visible minorities. This great mix of our two founding nations with those of other cultures makes the riding very special.

I join a long list of members who have served this area, including Brian Coburn, Gilles Morin, Bob McQuarrie, Bert Lawrence, Evelyn Gigantes and, back to the earliest member, William Craig, who represented the area from 1867 to 1875.

I intend to work hard on behalf of the residents of Ottawa-Orléans and the people of Ontario and am honoured to finally take my place in this, the 38th Parliament.

#### NANTICOKE GENERATING STATION

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** We in Ontario, and indeed across many neighbouring states, were given a glimpse of an unplugged province during the blackout of 2003. The impacts could have been greater had it not been for the tireless efforts of workers at our much-maligned Nanticoke coal-fired generating station. I paid a visit to the plant a few days afterwards to say thank you on behalf of the people in Ontario.

I am proud of this important facility. From the moment power switched off on that hot Thursday afternoon, workers toiled round the clock in heated conditions to help get this province back up and running.

1340

We in Ontario rely on OPG Nanticoke and its coal-fired generated power for about 20%—at times 30%—of our energy needs. In times of crisis, as we saw last spring, Nanticoke's input becomes even more vital to the province of Ontario.

Given recent reports of limited natural gas and of aging nuclear units, we in Ontario are lucky to have OPG Nanticoke. We're lucky to have its 600 employees.

We're fortunate to have coal reserves that are estimated somewhere in the order of 1,000 years worth of coal.

Any attempt to snuff out our coal-fired plants without plans for adequate supply replacement ignores the facts, eliminates those reserves and leaves us where we would have been without the work of our Nanticoke employees: in the dark.

#### VOLUNTEERS

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** Each year, the province of Ontario holds some 24 events to thank and reward community volunteers. Each year, 7,000 to 10,000 awards are given across Ontario. Just a few weeks ago, more than 300 volunteers from Mississauga were honoured for their volunteer contributions to our community.

Who among us, when we reflect upon our lives and upon the men and women whose influence has shaped us and our character today, will not have among our most influential figures a coach, a Scout master, a counsellor, or some other person whom we've encountered as a volunteer? These volunteers gave us their time generously and freely so that our time with them could be so important and so priceless.

Thank you to Mississauga's and to Ontario's volunteers, on behalf of all the lives you have touched, shaped and adorned with your talents, with your dedication and with your love. Thank you for passing along, through your example, this timeless gift of volunteerism to so many others to give and to give again.

#### GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Last the night the Ontario Energy Board Amendment Act, 2003, passed second reading. This bill continues the assault on farmers and small business by this government.

During the recent campaign, the Liberals pledged to retain the 4.3 cent price cap for families and small business. They broke that promise with this bill. But they also have attacked job creation in this province by raising the corporate tax rate and by eliminating personal tax cuts in January 2004.

The rate freeze on auto insurance covers only private vehicles—another attack on small business and farmers.

Moving nutrient management from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of the Environment portrays our farmers as environmental criminals, not land stewards.

Hydro rates, auto insurance, tax rates and the new regulatory burdens have been ushered in as the first offensive of the McGuinty war on farmers and small business. These are the producers and job creators in our province. Why is the McGuinty government attacking them?

This government has decided it wants to be known as the promise-breakers. Now they can add to their title the name of job killers.



## FLU IMMUNIZATION

**Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East):** Yesterday I, along with the Minister of Health, the Honourable George Smitherman, had the great pleasure of attending an influenza immunization clinic that was conducted in my riding of Mississauga East.

The clinic, which was hosted by the good people at Shoppers Drug Mart, was well attended and shows that the effort by the various levels of government, along with their respective agencies, including that of this government, have been doing a superb job at getting the message out that we can beat the flu.

Recently, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr Colin D'Cunha, stated, "Getting a flu shot continues to be the best way of reducing the chance of becoming ill with the flu."

Many of you here today have already had the flu shot; I thank you. For those of you who have not, I urge you to do so. All of you can appreciate how busy our schedules are at this time of year and how easy it is to put off something like this. So if not for your own sake, then for sake of your friends, your families and your co-workers, please make the time.

I would also urge all of you here today to take this message back with you to your constituents.

So let's roll up our sleeves and beat the flu.

## CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** This past weekend was a historic occasion in the history of our country. After many years of dedication, the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and the Alliance Party of Canada came together to form one strong, united and dynamic party. The Conservative Party of Canada is the result of hard work on the part of many thousands of Canadians across this country to form a strong and real alternative to the federal Liberals in the next election. Congratulations go to Peter MacKay and also to Stephen Harper, who worked tirelessly to ensure that this in fact would be a reality.

We've seen a 10-year drought of leadership in this country, and what the people of this country now will have, for the first time in many years, is a true alternative to the kind of Liberal-style government that we've had in Ottawa and quite frankly that is developing here in the province of Ontario. The voters will say no to that. Today, we stand proud of the work that has been done by people from across this country to give Canada a true alternative in the next federal election.

I would also say that, no matter how much I would hate to lose my colleague Bob Runciman, I think he'd make a great federal leader.

## VISITORS

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wanted to take a moment to acknowledge some students who are in the

gallery today from Don Valley West. Students from Crescent School and also from Denlow Public School are in the gallery, and I know there's another school, Blythwood Public School, that is coming. There are three schools from Don Valley West visiting today. I want to thank the teachers and the parent volunteers, and acknowledge the students.

## RACIAL PROFILING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** The Ontario Human Rights Commission delivered an important report today. It's called *Paying the Price: The Human Cost of Racial Profiling*. It's a startling report on the social and economic costs of racial profiling. The stories it tells are troubling.

Aboriginal people and Ontarians of African-Canadian, Arab, Chinese and Southeast Asian, Latin American, South Asian and Muslim descent are feeling as if they are being singled out because of the colour of their skin. Said one Ontarian, "You think you are like anyone else and you find actually you are not, because you are treated in a special way. It's humiliating."

New Democrats say that racial profiling has no place in our society. It's time to stop debating the issue and start acting on it. We say to the Liberal government, show courage and accept the report's call to action. We say, here are some immediate things you could do: set up a racial diversity secretariat, strike an independent police complaints commission and make anti-discrimination training mandatory for elementary and high school students. With some political will, we can tackle racial profiling and relegate it to the history books once and for all.

1350

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Mr Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act /  
Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil  
exécutif.

### AUDIT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sorbara moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor /  
Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le vérificateur provincial.



**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I'll speak to it during ministers' statements.

## CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT BRANCH ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003

## SUR LA DIRECTION DE LA SANTÉ DES ENFANTS ET DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to establish the Children's Health and the Environment Branch of the Ministry of the Environment / Projet de loi 19, Loi créant la Direction de la santé des enfants et de l'environnement au sein du ministère de l'Environnement.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** The environmental protection office in the US has had such a department in its section for a number of years. This bill deals with environmental policies, programs and standards, which need to be based on the most up-to-date research and provide the highest possible level of protection and support for the health of Ontario's children.

We now know that as children grow and develop, they're particularly vulnerable to environmental hazard. It directly affects their health, as we know, for instance, with pesticides. This bill would simply set up such a department within the Ministry of the Environment so we can track, research and make sure there are remedies there to deal with children's environmental health.

## VISITORS

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce the family of one of our pages, Olivia. They're here in the members' gallery today to watch their daughter from Beaches-East York.

## PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to raise this point reluctantly, but just now I watched Ms Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, stand at least three times to be recognized to introduce a bill. I don't understand why someone would have to stand three times to be recognized in an attempt to introduce a bill.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** On the member's point of order, I recognized the member when I saw her. If I did not recognize her the first time, I apologize. I will usually recognize the ministers first, and then go to the other members.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting sitting on Wednesday night without debate or amendment.

**The Speaker:** Did I hear unanimous consent? I think I heard a no.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just for the record, there are still some discussions going on with regard to that point of order. I'm a little bit surprised that the House leader raised it now, after he assured me he would not until we had a chance to further speak about this.

**The Speaker:** It's not a point of order.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** Our government has embarked upon a bold, positive, ambitious agenda to renew our democracy in the province of Ontario. We've made an historic commitment to democratic renewal because of a growing sense in this province that our democratic institutions and traditions are not keeping pace with changing times.

Voter participation in the last few general elections has slipped, and we all know that. Voter apathy and public cynicism is steadily rising, and I think we in this House all understand that. More and more people are becoming estranged from the very democratic process that makes some of the most important decisions in their day-to-day lives.

Clearly, now is the time to address these trends before it is too late, before people, especially young people, Ontario's future leaders, are turned off by democratic institutions that are unaccountable and unresponsive. That's why this week we are introducing a number of initiatives that are aimed at bringing our own House in order before we tackle further reform.

Yesterday we introduced legislation that would, if passed, extend the provisions of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act to Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. Next, we announced that a regulation under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will be amended to extend the act's provisions to the province's hydro companies.

Today we are taking another step toward democratic renewal in this province by delivering real accountability to the people of Ontario so that they can have more confidence in their democratic institutions. That's why earlier I introduced the Executive Council Amendment Act.

Being accountable in this Legislature through its members to the people of Ontario is the principle at the



heart of our parliamentary system. It is a system that is not shared by all nations of the world. In the United States, the head of the government, the President, does not come forth before Congress for question period. In our system, that happens. The government is held to account in this House, among other things, through question period. In this Legislature, the government is answerable to the people during question period. So the Executive Council Amendment Act would, if passed, require cabinet ministers to attend at least two thirds of all question periods over a government's term in office.

We're introducing this legislation to demonstrate our commitment to the people of Ontario to the principle of accountability in our legislative system. We believe it will send an important message to Ontarians: The government belongs to the people and is accountable to the people. This Legislative Assembly is an important place where that business takes place and that accountability happens.

We are introducing this bill now, because we believe the standard that people expect from their ministers must be made early in the life of a government's session. In the days and months to come, we will continue to work toward a more open government and encourage greater citizen participation. We will take government in a new direction. We will ensure that the people of Ontario get value for their public services. As we undertake democratic renewal, we will treat our institutions with the respect they deserve—no Magna budgets in this House.

I hope that is what this Legislature would want of the government of the day, and I encourage all members to support the efforts to strengthen our democracy. I urge you all to support this bill.

1400

## PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** On October 2, the people of Ontario chose change. They chose a government that is committed to bringing an open and transparent approach to managing both public finances and legislative institutions.

Yesterday, my colleague the Attorney General and minister responsible for democratic renewal spoke of our plan to bring to this House the most ambitious democratic renewal initiatives ever seen in the province of Ontario. He spoke then, and reiterated just before me, initiatives that would open up government and its agencies, bring the voices of Ontarians to Queen's Park, give members of this House an opportunity to do more on behalf of their constituents, ensure that ministers of the crown consistently attend question period and provide a fixed date for elections in the province.

As well, yesterday my colleague the Minister of Energy introduced amendments to the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act to make Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation and their subsidiaries subject to the same salary disclosure rules as apply to public servants.

But democratic renewal does not stop there. We need to make the entire public sector more transparent and responsible to Ontarians, because transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of our public services.

To achieve that objective, I am pleased to have introduced earlier today legislation that would, if passed, give the Provincial Auditor new powers to examine the broader public sector. The expansion of powers for the Provincial Auditor would have a direct effect on accountability, since the major institutions in the broader public sector represent the single most significant demand on the province's financial resources. About 80% of total government expenditures, excluding interest on debt, is in the form of transfers to broader public sector organizations and individuals.

The amendments I am introducing today would give the Provincial Auditor the expanded power to conduct full-scope value-for-money audits of the so-called SUCH sector—that is, school boards, universities, colleges and hospitals—and also all crown-controlled corporations and their related subsidiaries. These value-for-money audits will report whether money was expended with due regard to economy and efficiency and whether procedures were established to measure and report on the effectiveness of those programs. They will go a long way to ensure that the people of Ontario get the value they deserve from the money they invest in these public services. Organizations subject to this expanded mandate will be required to provide the Provincial Auditor with information and access to their books and records.

It is not enough just to say that we have put more money into something; we also have to have a clear understanding of how that money is being spent. With this bill today, we'll go a long way toward that objective.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Responses?

## DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

**Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton):** We have yet another amazing piece of legislation put forward, ostensibly to call the executive council into some kind of accountability. But guess what, folks? This act does nothing of the sort.

First of all, it sets the bar very low: Ministers must be in here only 66% of the time. Ministers should be in here every day, save and except for some ministers who have greater need out in the community. My view is that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade should be here less than 50% of the time, because he should be off trying to make business for Ontario. Other ministers should be here all the time.

The greatest sham of this whole act is, who keeps score? Is it the Speaker who keeps score? No, it's the Premier who keeps score. And on the scorecard there are several loopholes with regard to whether or not you're here. First of all, it's not counted if the absence is justified because of illness, bereavement—everybody understands that—or religious holiday “or some similar reason.”



Secondly, it's not counted as an absentee day if the minister is in the chamber "during part but not all of the period set aside for oral questions if the Premier is of the opinion that his absence is permissible"—not your opinion, Mr Speaker, not the opposition's opinion but the opinion of the Premier.

Again, this act leads not to less cynicism; it leads to more cynicism. Mark my words, there will be not one minister over there charged \$500 a day during this or any other session. Do you know why? Because the Premier will protect their hides to the end of the day.

#### PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** It appears that with the Premier being the arbiter, the quarterback is going to be the referee in this game as well, which is more than an understatement when they said they would do things differently.

I am pleased to rise to speak to the Audit Statute Law Amendment Act. It reminds me of a bill that Niagara Falls MPP Bart Maves brought in in the last session. If Mr Maves were here, I'm sure he would thank you for adopting his legislation.

I think it is a good idea that we bring more transparency to our transfer payment agencies. I'm certainly strongly in support of that. I think transparency is a good thing. I looked at the act. We'll want to have a more thorough review of the act to ensure that it gives the auditor the tools he needs to do his or her job.

It will be important as well, when the minister brings forward pieces of legislation like this—the auditor will undoubtedly require additional resources to complete his mandate. His office is one of the most underfunded offices in the country, and there hasn't been a will to address that.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The member from Nepean-Carleton.

**Mr Baird:** They're very testy today. We must be getting under their skin. Normie got them all riled up.

On first glance, I think this is a good bill. To my friend the Minister of Finance, I am disappointed that his House leader doesn't want to call this piece of legislation before we break for Christmas. Perhaps we could discuss passing this important piece of legislation expeditiously this fall.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Mr Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent for the member for Nickel Belt to respond.

**The Speaker:** The member for Kenora-Rainy River asks for unanimous consent to respond. Is it agreed?

1410

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I will deal with the announcement with respect to the Provincial Auditor's office first. I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the NDP, and I do so in the context of being the New Democratic Party critic—

**The Speaker:** Order. I heard a no coming from this section.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow the third party to have five minutes to respond to the government statements.

**The Speaker:** The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent for a five-minute response from the third party. I heard a no.

**Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just remind the New Democratic Party that motion 5 sits on the order paper that would allow them an automatic right of reply to this. We'd certainly be prepared, if the New Democrats and the government would agree, to pass order number 5 to give the NDP an opportunity to respond.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Let me deal with one thing at a time. I heard a no when they asked for unanimous consent for this. Now your point of order.

**Mr Baird:** I ask for unanimous consent to call government notice of motion number 5 and that it be passed without debate, right now, so that Ms Martel can respond to this statement.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Baird:** They don't want to respond.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Was it the third party, the New Democrats, who said no to that?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I'm not here to identify who said no. All I heard was a no, and therefore there is not unanimous consent.

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### ELECTORAL REFORM

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** Premier, yesterday and today your Attorney General, the minister responsible for democratic renewal, made a couple of statements in the House about how committed your government is to democratic renewal in the province of Ontario. Can you tell us why, in these last two statements, he has not announced the date of the next provincial election in Ontario?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member for his interest in the subject matter. We're very proud of the announcements we are making this week. We're very proud of the work that's been done by the minister responsible for democratic renewal. I can also assure him that in due course we will be bringing in legislation, something that we intend to send out to committee to consult the public, but we intend to move ahead with election dates that are predetermined.

**Mr Eves:** Well, there's no need to consult. The Liberal Party has already made up its mind. I quote from their campaign document. They're going to Americanize

the Ontario political system. "We will have fixed dates for elections. It is time to put the silly guessing game behind us once and for all." OK, put the silly game behind us once and for all and select the date of the next provincial election. You know when the last one was, so I assume the next one will be the first Thursday in October 2007.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The Leader of the Opposition may be afraid of transparency and accountability, but on this side of the House, I can assure you, we are not. The Leader of the Opposition may have enjoyed using his discretionary power to set the election date as some kind of plaything, but we intend to consult the people of Ontario and move ahead with a predetermined election date. We think that's an advancement. We think that's progress. We think that's in the interest of the Ontario public.

**Mr Eves:** This is not a difficult subject. Even Gordon Campbell in BC could figure it out. It's a very simple bill. It has two sections in it. I'd like to send this across to the Premier, and perhaps he can figure it out and tomorrow his Attorney General can actually bring in a bill. He can copy the one that BC did. It's two paragraphs long.

Will you not follow Premier Campbell's example and pass a very simple piece of legislation immediately?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I am absolutely delighted that the Leader of the Opposition has found religion and now embraces the concept of predetermined election dates. Now, if the Leader of the Opposition could only find religion when it comes to supporting our bill to grant still further powers to the Provincial Auditor, and if he would also support our bill to bring sunshine into the boardrooms of OPG and Hydro One—

I understand that the former Premier is now fully supportive of our movement toward democratic renewal in the province of Ontario. On behalf of the people of Ontario, I thank him for that support, although I must say it would have been great to have it when you were on this side, sir.

#### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** Premier, since you formed the government, we've heard tales of, "Whoa, the sky is falling," with respect to the financial situation in this province. You've indicated a significant deficit; we have disagreed with the conclusions that you've reached, and we have some differences with respect to Mr Peters's conclusions as well.

I have a press release in my hand which was issued by someone who spent some quality time with the Premier in the recent months, Mr John Williamson from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. They have done a financial analysis which indicates that there will be \$3.09-billion improvement in the revenues for the provincial government in this fiscal year. They're indicating that any deficit above \$600 million is a Liberal deficit.

I ask the Premier, would he respond to this new assessment, and if indeed anything above \$600 million is

a fabrication and an excuse for you to continue to break your promises?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I appreciate the member's question, but if he wants to get into any discussion of fabrication, then I want to bring to his attention the \$5.6-billion deficit which he maintained simply did not exist.

I appreciate the advice that I'm getting from the member opposite; I appreciate the advice from Mr Williamson. But I can assure both gentlemen and I can assure the people of Ontario that we will be moving forward in a responsible way when it comes to cleaning up the mess that your government left us.

**Mr Runciman:** The Premier and his colleagues, during the provincial election campaign, indicated they were prepared to deal with a projected deficit of \$2 billion.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Plus a billion-dollar surplus.

**Mr Runciman:** Yes, plus \$1 billion in reserves. So we're talking about \$3 billion.

**Mr Baird:** Another \$3 billion.

**Mr Runciman:** Another \$3 billion. Now we have an indication that the revenues have increased dramatically beyond what Mr Peters projected, and we're still getting excuses from the government to justify breaking promises which put them in those seats over there, solemn promises made to the voters of this province that they were going to keep. Within weeks, they have suggested they will not be keeping those promises, and they're using false, bogus justification to do it. The taxpayers' federation has confirmed that today.

Stand up and defend the positions you continue to take to justify breaking your many, many promises.

1420

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I'll tell you, Speaker, the last thing that I'm going to do is stand up and defend the fiscal record of this government. It seems that every single day we discover another mess, whether we're talking about \$800 million in deficits in previous years for our hospitals or \$25 million for children's aid societies. It doesn't seem to matter what kind of a rock we look under, we find another mess left to us by this government. We assure the people of Ontario we will proceed in a responsible and intelligent manner when it comes to cleaning up their mess.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, we discovered not two weeks ago that \$3 billion is missing from your economic plan. That's \$3 billion that you said—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. Within 10 minutes, the opposition House leader has demonstrated these placards in the House, and you know that's not allowed. I expect better behaviour from you.

**Mr Baird:** The bottom line is, Premier, you budgeted \$3 billion in your economic plan to deal with the contingency of the financial pressures facing this province. You're accepting the Peters report. Surely to goodness, you should stand in your place and should commit that every single dollar above the scheduled economic growth



in the Peters report will go to deal with this year's deficit, or is it going to fund an orgy of new spending to pay off the special interests that you bought off during the election campaign? Will you stand in your place and tell us you will put that money toward the deficit?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The former Minister of Energy might want to take a look, in addition to the Peters report, which uncovered \$5.6 billion by way of deficit, at the Epp report, which is a comprehensive indictment of his government's failure to exercise its responsibility as a diligent shareholder, which has left yet another mess for the people of Ontario. We will, without fail, move ahead in a progressive way and in a responsible way every single day to clean up the mess his former government left the people of Ontario.

### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** My question is for the Premier. Yesterday you were in New York trumpeting the benefits of doing business in Ontario. In your press release from yesterday you state that Ontario's economy is strong.

Today's Toronto Star has you quoted as saying, "It's hardly a case of trying to decide whether the glass is half full or half empty. On the contrary; those numbers represent one long tall drink of good economic news."

We thank you for finally recognizing that our economic policies have worked. Our tax cuts helped create over 1.1 million new jobs since 1995. Over 600,000 people left the welfare rolls since 1995. We balanced the budgets for four years in a row since 1995, and we were on track to do it a fifth time until you came along and messed it up. Why are you threatening the very economy that only yesterday you were saying is in such good shape?

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Before answering the question—I'm having difficulty hearing, especially from this side of the House.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member for his question. But we draw a very important distinction on this side of the House. The distinction is between the state of the economy, which is strong because of the good work and entrepreneurialism of the people of Ontario, and the state of the government finances, which are a mess because of what you've done to them. What I assured the economic community based in New York City is that we are here, we're on the job, we've rolled up our sleeves, we're taking a responsible course of action and we're going to turn this government around so that it too is in a healthy economic state.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Dr Jack Mintz of the C.D. Howe Institute released a study only two weeks ago on Ontario's tax competitiveness. He says, "We suggest that the biggest bang for the buck comes from corporate income tax rate cuts, which would help return Ontario to economic competitiveness with its major competitors."

Premier, you are raising corporate taxes, and taxes are jobs. You have indicated that you're raising hydro rates, small business taxes and minimum wage all at one time, and you've broken so many promises that people have serious concerns about the reliability of your word. Business can already react. According to Statscan, Ontario lost 6,600 jobs last month alone.

What are you going to do to actually help businesses stay in Ontario and live up to the boasting that you did in New York City this week?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I want to draw to the member's attention something that Jack Mintz said today in committee. He specifically said that tax cuts needed to be suspended, and that's what we have done. We are not going ahead with those tax cuts.

The message that we're getting from the business community, whether here in Ontario or in New York City, is that we have got to get our fiscal house in order. We're not going to proceed with tax cuts at a time that would compromise our public services or result in increased deficit sizes. What we're going to do is proceed in a responsible way. We will not lose sight of the fundamental interests of the people of Ontario: good-quality public services and, for the first time in a long time, real fiscal discipline inside the government.

### MID-PENINSULA HIGHWAY

**Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The people of my riding of Stoney Creek need some clarification on the issue of the mid-peninsula highway. There's been some confusion created by the opposition with regard to this. We need to know on two issues, with regard to our commitment to the highway and also to an environmental assessment. First of all, unlike the former Tory government, is the McGuinty government committed to a full environmental assessment on the mid-peninsula corridor project?

**Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** As I indicated in the House last week, our government is completely committed to a full environmental assessment for the mid-peninsula transportation corridor. This commitment was made as a part of the Liberal election platform, and we are keeping our promise.

**Ms Mossop:** My constituents are also concerned about the commitment to the overall project itself. There has been some confusion created, saying that we are slamming the brakes on the project. It is my understanding that our government is committed to the project because of the ever-increasing cross-border truck traffic, and also that that is putting pressure on the QEW to expand into our Niagara tender fruit lands. Minister, will you reassure the people of Stoney Creek that the government remains committed to the mid-peninsula transportation corridor project?

**Hon Mr Takhar:** Our government understands the importance of this project for trade, commerce and even the gridlock issues in that area, so we are absolutely

committed to proceeding with this project. But we want to make sure we do the full environmental assessment so we can assess the social, economic and environmental aspects of the issue.

### SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** My question is to the Premier. He'll know that I asked a question in this House regarding the refusal of his Minister of Finance to pay back a \$35,000 severance package that he received from the taxpayers of Ontario. I asked that question after some kerfuffle in this House yesterday, so I'm going to give the Premier an opportunity today to clarify his government's position.

A year ago, when they were in opposition on this side of the House, it was very clear that they demanded that Mr Eves pay back the severance he received as a retiring MPP, and that when he came back to serve as Premier of the province and take his seat in this place, he did the right and honourable thing and paid back the \$78,000 in severance that he received. The Liberals at that time demanded that that was the right and honourable thing to do.

So I ask the Premier, do you still believe that the right and honourable thing to do is that a member, upon returning to this place, should pay back the huge severance package he received from the taxpayers of Ontario?

1430

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I can understand why the member doesn't want to talk about the Epp report or the auditor's report or the discovery of a \$5.6-billion deficit. I can understand why he doesn't want to talk about those things. But, no, I do not agree that the Minister of Finance should be repaying his severance, given the time frame involved. We think that we should abide by the rule that applies to the broader public service, which says that if you return to work within two years, then different rules should apply. We're talking about a six-year period here, and as a result, I do not believe that the severance should be returned.

**Mr Wilson:** You don't agree the Minister of Finance should pay back the \$35,000 that he received from the taxpayers, but you have another member, the former mayor of Pickering, the current member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, who received \$135,000 in a severance package from the taxpayers of Ontario. We have a law in this province called double-dipping; it's against the law to double-dip.

Our former staff, for example, who received 16 weeks' severance must give up their severance package if at any time during that period they get another job with the provincial government, whether that be a board or agency, or on your side of the House or our side of the House. If you had a government job and you get another government job, you've got to give up your severance.

Will you ask your member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge to give up his \$135,000 severance from the

taxpayers of Ontario and abide by the double-dipping law in this province?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Again, I can understand why the members opposite don't want to talk about the independent assessments that we've had of the quality, or lack thereof, of the government they delivered, and I speak specifically about the Epp report and the Peters report.

Having said that, I say with confidence that the members of my government are abiding by the law.

### CARDIAC SURGERY

**Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** My question is for the Minister of Health. On an annual basis, anywhere from 600 to 1,000 people from my riding are forced to travel outside of Thunder Bay and leave northwestern Ontario for angioplasty and cardiac surgery services. These people are required to travel great distances to southern Ontario, Manitoba and other destinations to receive these services. As you can imagine, this creates a very stressful situation for these patients and their families.

Given the strong commitment made to the north by our party, given the specific commitment from both the Premier and the then-health critic, Sandra Pupatello, to a cardiac surgery unit in Thunder Bay, and given that such an endeavour would be an efficient, cost-effective use of resources, when will we have a cardiac surgery unit at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Thank you very much for the question. I'd like to acknowledge the interest in this issue by this member and the other member from Thunder Bay as well.

We're committed to a health care system that is responsive to our patient needs by better managing wait times and access to care. We acknowledge that in northwestern Ontario access to cardiac care has been a particular challenge. The ministry is currently reviewing a multi-department review around the proposal for cardiac surgery expansion at the hospital in Thunder Bay, and I commit to the member to work with him and the Thunder Bay hospital and community to address this and make sure that the people of northern Ontario have ready access to cardiac care.

**Mr Mauro:** Thank you for that, Minister. There are currently large costs to our health care system associated with the provision of cardiac and angioplasty surgeries in the north. Will you meet with me in the near future to discuss this issue?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** In response to the excellent question from the member, not only would I be happy to commit in the House to meeting with him and the other member from Thunder Bay to talk more about this issue, but I'd be happy to come to the community of Thunder Bay and meet with the community to see how we might be able to make progress and move this initiative forward expeditiously.



## FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** My question is to the Premier. You have made much of your new-found relationship with the federal Liberal government and in particular with your counterpart for the riding of Ottawa South, the Deputy Prime Minister and the finance minister of Canada. That same finance minister visited us for your throne speech, and I would have felt a whole lot better—I was pleased he was here—if his intransigence on tax-specific issues affecting Ontarians had been a little more progressive and not downright punitive. In particular, I reference the almost \$140 million that Ontario taxpayers are paying in GST payments to retire the Hydro debt. Have you ever privately or officially, formally or informally, asked the federal government, through the finance minister if he would drop these punitive goods and services taxes for electricity on Ontario taxpayers?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I know the Minister of Energy has something to say on this, but I can assure the member opposite that I in fact did raise the issue when I sat on that side of the House when you and your government refused to look into that matter.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. Maybe he can take the supplementary, because the Premier attempted to answer it in the first question.

**Mr Jackson:** Premier, you failed to answer a simple question about your ability to speak up for Ontario taxpayers. You failed to get Ontario's fair share of the federal SARS money. It was the same John Manley who shortchanged Ontario taxpayers by over \$350 million. You failed to speak up for Ontario taxpayers when two years ago the federal government discovered that they had made a billion-dollar mistake, and it was the same John Manley who forced Ontario to pay back a billion dollars that could have gone to pay down our debt.

You failed to speak up for Ontario taxpayers when Ontario employers paid the lion's share of \$20 billion of the unemployment insurance slush fund that the federal government has been using to balance their books on the backs of Ontario businesses—the same John Manley strategy.

Premier, my question is this: Why is it that all your personal relationship with John Manley seems to have produced in this province for Ontario taxpayers is that you've been able to convince him to open up his federal seat for your brother, and in exchange you're probably going to appoint him—

**The Speaker:** Question.

**Mr Jackson:** —to the board of Ontario Hydro or OPG.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** With this line of questioning, I'm wondering whether the member is getting ready to launch his bid for the leadership of the new federal party.

I want to tell the member opposite something that he may have missed. When it comes to the issue of SARS

funding, you and your government received nothing. You brought home nothing to the people of Ontario. You engaged in some kind of a skirmish which resulted in nothing.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I'm not quite sure that you want the answer. The Premier has attempted about three times to answer the question. If you want to hear it, could you give him the opportunity?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The point I'm making is that at the end of the day, money talks. His government got us zero. They brought home zero dollars with respect to SARS funding. We brought home, in short order, \$330 million. We're proud of our ability to work with the federal government.

## UPTOWN THEATRE

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to ask a question on behalf of New Democrats.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The member for Kenora-Rainy River has asked for unanimous consent for a question. I heard a no.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I agree to seek unanimous consent to allow the leader of the third party to place a question.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that he get unanimous consent? I'm hearing a no.

1440

**Mr Hampton:** On a point of order, Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to ask a question concerning the collapse of the Uptown Theatre and the death and the injuries that resulted therefrom.

**The Speaker:** The member from Kenora-Rainy River has asked unanimous consent to ask a specific question on the collapse of the Uptown Theatre. Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Mr Hampton:** My question is for the Premier. I'm sure you heard that yesterday the Uptown Theatre collapsed. One person was killed; 14 were very seriously injured. I'm sure our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the victims.

Earlier this month you gave a speech where you said it was a good thing to impose a hiring freeze on the civil service. What we've learned is that it looks as if this construction site was not being adequately inspected. In fact, we know that we are short by some 70 construction work site inspectors across the province. In my part of the province, which is larger than most European countries, there are only two construction work site inspectors.

Premier, in view of the fact that you think it's a good idea to impose this hiring freeze on the civil service, do you also think it's a good idea that we're short some 70 work site inspectors in the Ministry of Labour?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I want to begin, in keeping with

the sentiment first expressed by the member opposite, by offering on behalf of the government our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those affected in this terrible tragedy. I also want to assure the member opposite that when we put in place our hiring freeze, we said, and we were very explicit about this, that there would be an exception for cases affecting public safety. It is my understanding that we are in the process of completing the hiring of some 25 new inspectors, and we intend to continue with that.

**Mr Hampton:** We spoke with some of those inspectors today. The 25 that you refer to were already announced before your government took office. In fact, what we know is that we need a further 42 inspectors. The 25 that were announced—it takes a year of training before they can even get on the job.

Premier, one person died; 14 were seriously injured. Even the owner of the property said that he had concerns that it was not being adequately inspected. He had concerns about what was happening there. Which is more important to you, Premier: that you continue with the hiring freeze, or that workers and citizens who happen to frequent construction sites have their health and safety adequately inspected? Are you going to hire the full complement of workplace inspectors now, so that we can protect the safety of workers and the public of Ontario?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I know the Minister of Labour has more details that he can share with the member.

**Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour):** First of all, it is of the utmost importance to this government that the health and safety of workers and workplaces be protected, and we will do absolutely everything to ensure that happens. That's number one.

Secondly, the Premier was absolutely correct in his answer to the honourable member's first question when he said we are completing the hiring of 25, whom the previous government had started hiring at the end of their mandate. That's point two; the answer was completely correct.

Third, the honourable member is correct when he speaks about a reduction in the number of inspectors. When the previous government took office in 1995, there were 278 inspectors. By the time they completed, there were 205.

When we took office, the first thing we attempted to do, and we are doing, is determine how many inspectors we need as part of an overall health and safety strategy to ensure—to guarantee—that we maximize health and safety in the workplace. We are going to do that. This was a terrible tragedy, and it should not be minimized. Our determination is to make sure we have—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### HAMILTON DEVELOPMENT

**Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** My question is to the Minister of the Environment. My riding of Hamilton West, of which I am fiercely proud, offers the scenic beauty of the Niagara Escarpment complemented by the magnificent and busy harbour.

But we have many parcels of land, known as brownfields, currently laying waste. These brownfields demonstrate a city in transition, a city whose industry formed the backbone of this province's economy at the turn of the last century. These parcels of land must be returned to vibrant residential use if Hamilton's vision of a sustainable and healthy urban core is to be realized.

Minister, what will the government do to ensure the redevelopment of these lands for the future prosperity of this great city?

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** I want to assure the member that this government is committed to assisting cities across Ontario, including the great city of Hamilton, to proceed with development in a meaningful way. We know that some of the challenges related to development more recently have been related to sprawl. That of course, for all the people of Ontario and particularly the Minister of the Environment, gives cause for some concern.

You would recall that in the throne speech the Premier has committed to a brownfields redevelopment plan. We see this as a very responsible way to promote development within city boundaries. These are sites that are now serviced, usually, by the city. It can be a very economical process. We are going to do all we can to ensure that these brownfields can be redeveloped, having good regard for the environment, ensuring that the redevelopment is carried out in a very safe way to the health and well-being of the people in the community.

**Ms Marsales:** Minister, as you can see, there is a new vitality about Hamilton and a new spirit from our new mayor, Mr Di Ianni, to the hard-working leadership of our chamber of commerce. We want to bring a change to the direction of Hamilton's downtown. It's going to take teamwork and coordination to tackle the redevelopment of these brownfield sites in Hamilton.

I'd like to get your commitment today to meet with the representatives of the city of Hamilton and the chamber of commerce to discuss this redevelopment. Will you agree to meet with those representatives?

**Hon Mrs Dombrowsky:** This government intends to be very open and transparent. We do want to meet with all the partners on issues that impact our communities and that impact our environment. Certainly, I would be very happy to meet with officials from the great city of Hamilton or any other municipality that has an interest in developing brownfield sites.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton):** My question is for the Premier. I want to ask you about integrity and about your failure to keep promises. I want to ask you about your failed commitment to give MPPs a greater role in this Legislature.

In the short time you've been in power, your government has demonstrated an astonishing arrogance when it comes to democracy in this place. We have seen you as



Premier intervene in the election of the new Speaker. Your government has been petty and mean in its treatment of opposition members with regard to office accommodation and seating arrangements.

Now, Mr Premier, we watch as you take the unprecedented step of insisting that the chair of the committee that vets your own political appointments must be a member of the Liberal caucus. Why are you going to turn the government agencies committee into a clearinghouse for your own patronage appointments? Is this your idea of democratic renewal?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know the minister for democratic renewal is anxious to speak to these issues, Speaker.

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** We look forward to getting the advice from the honourable member, who has served in this House before. My parliamentary assistant, the member for Sarnia-Lambton, is heading up an unprecedented process, one that you might have done when you were the House leader, except you didn't serve in a government that had the guts to move forward with democratic renewal initiatives.

We aren't here just to talk about democratic renewal; we're proceeding with democratic renewal. That's why I know that Ms Di Cocco is looking forward to meeting with the government House leader and his counterparts, so that we can in fact have real, meaningful participation of members of provincial Parliament in this House, unlike what happened under Mr Sterling's government.

1450

**Mr Sterling:** I understand the Attorney General hasn't been in this place that long, but the Premier has been here since about 1990 and he knows that the whole appointments review process was in fact created in about 1986 or 1987 in the previous Liberal government. All parties of the Legislature supported this, because we saw there was a critical need for an independent body to play an oversight role in reviewing political appointments made by the government of the day.

I'm sure you know that since 1986, the Chair of this committee has always been a member of the opposition. This tradition was established to ensure that this committee didn't become a rubber-stamp clearinghouse for the government's own political appointments. Will your government show integrity and reverse your decision to control this committee from the Premier's office?

**Hon Mr Bryant:** I'm surprised that the member would ask that question. When he was in government, they appointed 50% of their own defeated candidates to public appointments.

I'm surprised that the member would want to raise the subject of attendance in this House when we have just brought forth legislation to require all cabinet ministers to attend in this House two thirds of the time. We need to do that. We need to do that because we have to deal with the reality of former cabinet ministers who were recalcitrant

about attending. A certain former finance minister, Mr Ernie Eves, now the leader of the official opposition, attended less than half of question periods in this House in the year 2000. If our bill had been the law, Ernie Eves would have owed \$7,500 for the year 2000 alone. That won't be happening under the McGuinty government. It's time to get some accountability in this House.

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: The minister might want to rise in his place and retract the statement he just made, because it is not appropriate, as I'm sure he's aware and you are aware, to refer to another member's attendance record in this House.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Minister?

**Hon Mr Bryant:** Withdrawn.

**The Speaker:** New question. The member for Scarborough Southwest.

I'm just waiting for the deputy House leader from the official side to quiet down a little bit for me. Thanks.

## COMMUNAUTÉ CULTURELLE DE L'ONTARIO

**M. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough-Sud-Ouest):** Ma question s'adresse à la ministre de la Culture. Comme vous le savez, la province de l'Ontario est le lieu de présentation d'environ 40 % des activités artistiques du pays. Le secteur des arts et de la culture fait croître l'économie de 11 \$ milliards par année.

Madame la ministre, l'Ontario dispose des plus grands artistes et des plus grandes institutions artistiques au monde. L'Orchestre symphonique de Toronto, le Musée royal de l'Ontario et les festivals de Stratford et Shaw attirent des visiteurs du monde entier, enrichissent notre qualité de vie et alimentent notre économie. Qu'allez-vous faire pour assurer la vitalité de l'industrie des arts et de la culture en Ontario ?

**L'hon Madeleine Meilleur (Ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones):** Premièrement, je voudrais remercier mon collègue pour la qualité de son français ; c'est excellent.

Je voudrais vous dire que depuis ma nomination au poste de ministre de la Culture, j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer plusieurs organismes de la communauté culturelle. Comme vous le savez, monsieur le Président, la vie culturelle ontarienne nous touche tous et toutes. Peu importe notre âge, notre lieu de résidence ou nos origines, nous sommes influencés par la culture de différentes façons. En protégeant et en montrant notre patrimoine culturel unique et irremplaçable, nous renforçons notre sentiment d'appartenance et de fierté.

L'éducation à propos des arts est une nécessité. Les jeunes de l'Ontario ont besoin d'être plus exposés aux arts, parce que les experts nous disent que l'éducation artistique aide à améliorer le rendement académique de nos jeunes.

Ce sont quelques-unes des raisons pour lesquelles nous allons créer un conseil ministériel des arts et de la culture, et c'est une priorité pour notre gouvernement.

Nous avons besoin d'un forum de discussion, et ce groupe consultatif composé de membres de la communauté des arts sera l'idéal pour remplir ces fonctions. Notre objectif est de donner à nos organismes culturels un financement stable et prévisible. Ce financement va nous permettre de créer une relève artistique talentueuse et d'administrateurs compétitifs dans le domaine des arts. Nous voulons—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Merci. Thank you. There is so much in that. Maybe in the supplementary—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Maybe you'll get that in the supplementary.

**M. Berardinetti:** Merci, madame la ministre. Dans un récent sondage, plus de 92 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes ont répondu que les arts contribuent à une augmentation générale de leur qualité de vie. Qu'allez-vous faire pour promouvoir les arts et la culture, de même que pour veiller à ce que les Ontariens soient au courant des activités culturelles qui leur sont présentées dans l'ensemble de la province ?

**L'hon M<sup>me</sup> Meilleur:** Je suis entièrement d'accord avec mon collègue le député de Scarborough—Sud-Ouest. Le secteur de la culture contribue énormément au bien-être économique et à la vie sociale de l'Ontario. La culture enrichit la qualité de vie de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Le gouvernement et mon ministère allons continuer à travailler avec les organismes, groupes et individus pour faire en sorte que le secteur culturel continue de grandir. Nous avons prévu plusieurs initiatives pour atteindre ce but. Une des ces nouvelles initiatives c'est la création de la médaille du premier ministre, soulignant l'excellence dans le domaine des arts. Cette médaille sera accordée à des individus ou organismes qui ont contribué d'une façon extraordinaire aux arts et à la culture de l'Ontario. Nous sommes en train de concevoir des moyens innovateurs pour faire connaître les produits artistiques ontariens.

À ce sujet, j'encourage les citoyens et les citoyennes de tous les coins de la province à se détendre pendant la période des fêtes et à visiter tous nos organismes culturels, soit le Musée des beaux-arts de l'Ontario, le Musée royal de l'Ontario ou le Centre des sciences.

**Le Président:** Merci, madame. Thank you.

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to give the minister another eight minutes.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I understand from the government they'll give her a minister's statement when she could do that in 20 minutes.

**M. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Sur un point d'ordre, monsieur le Président : Félicitations à la ministre pour sa nomination et son élection à cette Chambre. Elle a annoncé une nouvelle initiative du gouvernement. Est-ce que c'est propre de faire ça dans une question ?

Comme porte-parole pour les affaires culturelles, est-ce que je peux avoir cinq minutes pour répondre ?

**The Speaker:** It's not a point of order, but I also welcome you as a minister.

1500

## ITER FUSION PROJECT

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is for the Premier. It is about a massive, superb research project that is just what Ontario needs in the future, and that is the ITER project. I know that you are aware this is the long-term international project to establish fusion as a viable option for power generation. It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. It is a big idea. It's an opportunity for Ontario and Canada to excel in the world at scientific research. It would mean at least 250 of the best and the brightest people in the world moving to Ontario, specifically to eastern Ontario: Clarington and Durham region and the counties east of there.

Our competitors are Japan and France, and they have entered bids. There has been a great deal of work done in Ontario on our bid. It was supported by the Eves government. I want to know what steps you have taken since your election in October on behalf of the people of Ontario with the federal Liberal government to get federal Liberal support for this very important scientific project for Ontario.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I know the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has been working very hard on this file, and I'm sure he's prepared to answer this.

**Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade):** The Ontario government has consistently expressed its support for the ITER project. Shortly after the Premier was sworn in, on October 6, he sent a letter to the Prime Minister of the country and I want to quote from the letter. It says, "Prime Minister, it is very important that Canada indicate its commitment to the ITER project as soon as possible. Once again, I urge you and your government to come to the table with a solid financial commitment to this vital endeavour."

It was indeed a very important initiative. The Premier supported it, the Minister of Finance also expressed his support for this project. This government was fully behind the effort. We sent our officials to the various international meetings, supported by the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. We continue to support the efforts and initiatives.

**Mr Flaherty:** The reports in the press are negative of late, as the minister probably knows. You made a commitment—the Premier made a commitment in writing—in support of this project before he was elected. Premier Eves and our government made a 50% commitment that we would participate regardless of the siting, whether the siting was in Ontario or elsewhere. This is 68,000 jobs in Ontario going forward over the next 30 years—operational jobs, construction jobs. Just as importantly, this is



the big idea in the scientific world today in terms of research.

What have you done? Have you gone to Ottawa and talked to your federal Liberal friends, to Mr Martin and Mr Manley? You pride yourself on the relationship. What have you accomplished? Can you assure the people of Ontario that this project will get federal support? Because then we'll win.

**Hon Mr Cordiano:** I can assure the member that our relationship with the federal government is a very sound one. What we have accomplished is \$300 million in terms of funding for SARS, something you failed to do over there. We were able to put that together.

I would also like to note that our government is working very well with the federal government, given the recent GTA caucus meeting that was held between the federal members of Parliament and our members of provincial Parliament—a very historical meeting, I might add, that dealt with transportation and issues around housing, something you miserably failed to do when you were the government. You failed to sign an agreement on housing with the federal government. You couldn't co-operate if your lives depended on it, and it was proven to the people of this province because they threw you out of office.

With respect to ITER, the federal officials indicate that the project is still being considered. We fully support it. There is a commitment made by this government in unequivocal terms that we will support our 50%. It's still on the table. We continue to support the initiative.

### SOFTWOOD LUMBER

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, it appears that the Canadian and US negotiators have worked toward a proposed interim deal on the softwood lumber dispute. Many of us have heard loudly and clearly from Ontario's softwood lumber producers that this deal is not in the best interests of Ontario's softwood industry. In fact, it's my understanding that they have written the federal Trade Minister Pettigrew, urging him to categorically reject the proposal.

I share the concerns raised by the softwood industry. I fear that this agreement will punish our softwood producers and this could lead to further job losses in northern Ontario, which we certainly cannot afford. Minister, will you fight for Ontario's softwood industry and will you protect these valuable jobs in northern Ontario?

**Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):** I'd very much like to thank the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North for the question. As he knows, especially to our region of Ontario, it's a very important issue, it's a very important industry and it's especially a very important industry to northern Ontario. We have to fight for that industry and for our economy.

Forestry is 10% of the economy of Ontario; it's about 50% of our northern economy. This is a bad deal for Canada, and therefore it's a bad deal for this province.

The quotas that will come out of this agreement mean that there will be an immediate 8% to 10% production cut in our mills across northern Ontario. Of course, that's going to mean production cuts and therefore laid-off workers. For new and expanding producers, such as First Nations that we're dealing with on a day-to-day basis, expanding their economic opportunities, it's going to mean that they're no longer going to be able to enter that market, so it's going to curtail their activities. Furthermore, the \$1 billion that our industry is going to leave on the table means that the US industry is going to be able to take that money and modernize their facilities and become more competitive against our industry, at our industry's expense. Quite frankly, those countervailing duties have shown to be illegal by the WTO panel. This is a bad deal.

**Mr Gravelle:** I think all of us in the north appreciate that response.

I was also pleased to see that Minister Pettigrew has stated that he will take his marching orders to accept or reject the deal from the industry and the provinces. He's quoted as saying something I'd like to quote back to the House: "I will listen to what the Canadian industry and the provinces have to say. If they believe it's good enough, that will be it. If they believe that we should continue with the litigation course instead and try to get something else, I will do that." I trust that he is committed to that position.

Minister, my supplementary to you is, have you had the opportunity to share your concerns about the proposed deal with Minister Pettigrew and your provincial counterparts? If so, what do you see as the next step for the province?

**Hon Mr Ramsay:** Yes, over the last few days I have been in touch with International Trade Minister Pettigrew and my colleagues across the country. I've made it very firmly known that this is a bad deal for Ontario. Our government is going to stand up for the forest industry of this province. To solve this dispute is a very high priority for our government. It has been ongoing and hurting our northern economy especially. To date, 17 communities and over 4,000 workers have been affected by this.

We must continue to negotiate, but we don't want anything to prematurely fold those negotiations or prejudice the clear progress that we are making with the trade panel rulings that have come down so far. Each of these decisions should be giving us greater and greater leverage to negotiate a better deal. I'm asking the minister to do that, to go back to the table and get a better deal for Ontario and Canada.

### OAK RIDGES MORaine

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. As the minister responsible for the Oak Ridges moraine, he has now been in his position for a number of weeks and I'm sure he has had an opportunity to familiarize himself with his files. I wonder if the minister can, for the benefit of the House

and the people who are interested in the negotiations that he, no doubt, has been leading, confirm for us whether he has in fact seen an estimate of the costs involved for the trade-off of some 50 acres in Richmond Hill. Can he confirm for us whether he is aware of the cost of that trade-off?

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** I can tell you this: The deal we made about three or four weeks ago was a heck of a lot better than your deal. Under our deal there will be 900 fewer homes built there, there will be a much wider corridor for wildlife, and there will be a \$3.5-million contribution toward the parkland. As you know from earlier comments made in this House, the trade-off of land for units will be on a value per value basis. That process is going on right now.

1510

**Mr Klees:** This is really quite appalling. As the minister who has the lead responsibility for negotiating this deal, what he's admitting to the House today is that he has no idea what the value is that he's trading off. That's shameful. As a government that represents itself to be responsible, this first major sell-off that this minister is responsible for—he has no idea. Can the minister at least clarify whether or not he has had any dealings whatsoever directly on this file of negotiating this deal? Has he had any involvement personally in negotiating this deal? Clarify that.

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** The real tragedy of the situation is that your government made a solemn commitment to this House that the Oak Ridges moraine was going to be protected, but at the same time you made a side deal with the developers to allow 6,000 units of houses to be built there. We took that bad deal and were able to negotiate a reduction of 900 units and a major contribution toward the parkland, and also made sure there is a much wider corridor for the wildlife that is there so that the environment can be protected in a much better way for future generations.

### SCHOOL FACILITIES

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** My question today is for the all-important Minister of Tourism and Recreation. As you're well aware, the cost associated with use of community schools has skyrocketed over the past eight years. Many sports-based organizations throughout the province, especially in my riding of York West, are feeling the weight of increased user fees for the use of community school facilities, including library spaces. What part is your ministry playing in decreasing those costs and helping our community schools become the vibrant centre of activities they once were?

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** It's an excellent question and one which requires an answer, which we did not hear previously, because what happened—I know that members of the government of the past will want to know what actually happened. They decreased the amount of money that was

available within the school system, for instance, for the community use of schools. As a result, school boards charged a tremendous amount of money for the utilization of those schools.

Second, they downloaded on to municipalities all kinds of additional onerous financial responsibilities and, as a result, we have these huge increases in fees. I am working together with the Minister of Education and with the Minister of Community and Social Services in a multi-ministry manner, along with our municipalities and our partners who are involved in sports and recreation, to bring down those costs so that those who have a modest income will be allowed to have their children participating, and the health of the province will be increased immensely.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** On a point of order: With all respect, in light of the fact that the Minister of Municipal Affairs did not answer my question, I am going to request a late show, so that it gives him an opportunity to think about it.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Serve papers and the show will be on the road.

### PETITIONS

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of constituents, like Eve Vandering and Herman Kropper. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government respected the right of parents to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government passed a law providing parents with a tax credit of up to 50% of tuition to a maximum of \$3,500 when it's fully implemented; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now introduced a bill that will cancel this important credit that provides working-class parents with the ability to send their children to a school of their choice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To protect the equity in education tax credit and stop the Liberal tax hike bill from becoming law."

I affix my signature in support.

#### TUITION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I keep getting petitions from the Canadian Federation of Students regarding freezing tuition fees. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas average fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and



"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increased tuition fees and diminished access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"(2) Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to put my signature on this page.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit seeks to restore equity and parental choice to Ontario's education system;

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit allows those from lower-income homes to have the same opportunities as other students;

"Whereas families who choose to send their children to independent schools have to pay twice for their children's education;

"Whereas the majority of families who benefit from the equity in education tax credit come from lower or middle-class homes;

"Whereas the United Nations has called on the government of Ontario to remedy the inequity in the education system;

"Whereas senior members of Dalton McGuinty's cabinet support the equity in education tax credit;

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has been inconsistent on his stance on the equity in education tax credit;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised the people of Ontario that he would not raise our taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow the equity in education tax credit to continue to be the law of the land in Ontario, and allow lower- and middle-income parents the privilege to send their children to independent schools if they so choose, and vote against Bill 2, which would repeal the equity in education tax credit."

I affix my name.

#### SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I have a petition entitled "Don't scrap the seniors' property tax credit" signed by people from Selkirk, Jarvis, Vanessa, La Salette, Langton, Port Dover, Waterford and Simcoe.

"Whereas Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty has announced plans to scrap the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, eliminating this tax break for renters and owners;

"Whereas this tax relief would help Ontario seniors remain in their own apartments and houses and assist them with rising costs;

"Whereas this tax relief program would provide \$450 million in net benefits for 945,000 senior households;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario support Ontario seniors and help them remain in their own homes by maintaining the PC's Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program and rejecting any proposal to take this tax break away from our senior citizens."

I sign my name to it.

#### HISTORIC VEHICLES

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the province of Ontario, through Bill 99, enabled owners of historic automobiles to display year of manufacture plates on their vehicles; and

"Whereas John O'Toole, MPP for Durham, has worked with others, including MTO staff, to pass legislation allowing registration of vehicles using year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas owners and restorers of old automobiles have made suggestions for improving regulations governing year of manufacture plates; and

"Whereas these improvements would enable old auto enthusiasts to display year of manufacture plates and further encourage the collection and restoration of vintage vehicles;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact legislation that would make more licence plate numbers available to the public by freeing up the numbers that have been assigned to non-automotive vehicles such as trailers and snowmobiles; and

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reduce the cost of year of manufacture plates to encourage more owners to make use of these plates and reflect the fact that most historic vehicles are not driven on a regular basis."

I'm pleased to support and sign this petition.

## LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition here signed by a great number of constituents. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas this government promised to invest in the next generation of researchers and professors by increasing graduate scholarships by 50%;

"Whereas your government promised to improve financial help for students;

"Whereas your government promised to offer prepaid tuition programs for students;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the provincial government to stop playing politics and campaigning for the next election and start working for the taxpayers of this great province. Please keep at least some of your promises to the people of Ontario."

It's signed, as I said, by a great number of people in this great province, and I affix my signature to it.

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## HYDRO LINES

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I have a petition from constituents from my riding. It says:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Improve hydro lines to stop frequent and prolonged power outages on the Kahshe Lake corridor."

I support this petition, and I affix my signature to it.

## SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I have another petition from the residents near the old Hughes Public School, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Hughes Public School at 17 Innes Avenue in the city of Toronto closed down, and its premises have been declared surplus by the Toronto District School Board;

"Whereas the city of Toronto has issued a building permit to the Toronto District School Board permitting the reconstruction of Hughes Public School for an entity called Beatrice House, for the purpose of a private academic school;

"Whereas the Beatrice House is not a private school registered with the Ministry of Education, nor a mident has been issued to that organization;

"Whereas within the context of the zoning bylaw (438-86), the subject lands have been designated as R2 Z0.6 and permit a 'private academic, philanthropic or religious school';

"Whereas the TDSB has chosen not to lease the subject premises to a computer training company for \$1.25 million annually. Instead, the board has chosen to lease it to the Beatrice House for a fraction of the current market value;

"Whereas a lease has not been signed between the TDSB and Beatrice House, while renovations to the building are underway;

"Whereas local taxpayers' concerns have been ignored by the TDSB;

"Whereas other locations, such as the Brother Edmund Rice School at 55 Pelham Park, or the Earls court Public School at 29 Ascot, which are being closed down, have been offered to Beatrice House to no avail;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Honourable Minister of Education investigate the leasing arrangement between the Toronto District School Board and Beatrice House inasmuch as:

"(1) Boards are to seek fair market value when selling, leasing or otherwise disposing of schools except that the price for the property not to exceed the value of the ministry's grant for the new pupil places when the purchaser is a coterminus board, a provincial school or a publicly funded care and treatment facility offering programs leading to a diploma.

"(2) Boards are to offer the property to coterminus boards and other public agencies operating in the area in accordance with the priority order currently specified in regulation 444/98.

"(3) Toronto District School Board has not dealt in good faith with our neighbourhood residents.

"Therefore, we respectfully ask" the Minister of Education "to consider our plea for justice. The Toronto District School Board has ignored our concerns and due diligence. We as a community tried everything within our power to fight the glaring and obvious wrong done to us, to no avail."

I'm delighted to make this presentation to you.

## SMALL BUSINESS TAX RELIEF

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** This is a petition titled "Stay the Course on Small Business Tax Relief." It was signed by people attending a meeting of the local chapter of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association.

"Whereas business tax cuts have helped fuel the strongest economic and job growth ever seen in Canada; and

"Whereas corporate income taxes on the smaller businesses that create most of our new jobs have been scheduled to be reduced to 5% in 2004 and 4% in 2005; and

"Whereas the corporate income tax rate for manufacturing and processing firms has been scheduled to be cut to 10% for 2004, 9% for 2005 and 8% for 2006; and

"Whereas the general corporate income tax rate has been scheduled to be 11% for 2004, 9.5% for 2005 and 8% for 2006; and

"Whereas the capital tax on employers is on the road to be cut by 10% in 2004, with the plan to scrap it entirely;



"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario stay the course and maintain the scheduled tax reductions for job-creating businesses."

I affix my signature to this petition.

#### LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this government promised to live by the balanced budget law; and

"Whereas your government promised to measure every investment against results; and

"Whereas your government promised to give the Provincial Auditor enhanced powers to protect taxpayers;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the provincial government to stop playing politics and campaigning for the next election and start working for the taxpayers of this great province. Please keep at least some of your promises to the people of Ontario."

I'll sign that as well.

#### TUITION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and the subject of it is the ever-increasing rise of tuition fees in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Freeze tuition fees for all programs at the current level; and

"(2) Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, all post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Our side of the House, all of us here, are certainly in favour of this petition, and I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

#### LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this government promised to ensure that parents had access to affordable quality daycare; and

"Whereas your government promised to end the 60-hour workweek; and

"Whereas your government promised to create an auto sector strategic investment fund;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the provincial government to stop playing politics and campaigning for the next election and start working for the taxpayers of this great province. Please keep at least some of your promises to the people of Ontario."

I'd be happy to sign my signature to that as well, and I'd be happy to give it to Daniel here to run down.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Oak Ridges has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs concerning the Oak Ridges moraine agreement. This matter will be debated at 6 o'clock.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATE STABILIZATION ACT, 2003

##### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA STABILISATION DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 5, An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles and to provide for the review and regulation of risk classification systems and automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles / *Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à geler temporairement les taux d'assurance-automobile dans les cas des voitures de tourisme et à prévoir l'examen et la réglementation des systèmes de classement des risques et des taux d'assurance-automobile les concernant.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I think we've reached questions and comments on the member for Oxford's speech.

**Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham):** I'm happy to speak in favour of this bill, because during the campaign we received numerous requests in respect of how incredible the insurance rates have been during the last few years. I think it is important for us to recognize that this does not apply only to residents and ordinary motorists but also to small business people who have been experiencing such great difficulty in running their businesses. Insurance premiums are in fact one of the greatest expenses for these folks.

1530

I think it's important for us to freeze the insurance premiums to begin with, because this is a much more complex issue than some of us initially anticipated. I think it is fair to say that even some of the members do not fully appreciate the complexities when we really get down to the level of detail that we now intend to.

It is unfortunate enough that many of the insurance companies obtained approvals even prior to the election, never mind prior to October 23, when the announcement was made, but many of the residents now have received bills with increases of insurance premiums. It of course depends on medical costs as well as administrative costs, and those are exactly the aspects our government intends to deal with.

I want to say that it might be unfair for us to just say that the professionals such as physiotherapists, neurologists, occupational therapists, chiropractors and all the rest have been irresponsible in making the insurance premiums as high as they are. I do not accept that. I think it's much more complex than that, and we really want to get down to the facts, so that we know what numbers we're looking at, how much which profession is in fact charging, maybe in an unfair manner, and we want to deal with those unfair details.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments on the debate by the member from Oxford, a person who has a great deal of business experience and municipal experience. Certainly in his years as the president and chairman of the ROMA board of directors, this issue of insurance has come up many times in the life of the honourable member from Oxford. We've heard a lot of debate, and I know we're voting on this this afternoon at 6 o'clock, but I think what's important is that we have to know that most of the plans we're looking at now were actually implemented earlier in the year.

On July 2, 2003, our government at the time announced changes to regulations which complement legislative changes passed in the budget bill. That's the bill called Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act (Budget Measures), 2002. I just wanted to put on the record in this debate that the ones on July 2 did in fact streamline access to treatment for common injuries such as whiplash by introducing a pre-approved framework for treatment. They improve benefits for children suffering from serious injuries; they restrict the use of medical examinations by insurers in order to end duplication; they prohibit unfair business practices by health care providers and paralegals; and they introduced a code of conduct for paralegals.

It's too bad that the Liberals didn't follow up on this as they took over the government. But again, they've decided to take another route, and we'll look forward to the results of that. They've already guaranteed, under a promise, a 20% reduction in rates. We look forward to seeing those rates happen. I hope it's not another broken promise.

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** I'm pleased to respond to the member from Oxford and his comments

the last time this was debated. I'd like to actually respond to something that the member from Simcoe North just mentioned, which is that much of what we are seeing happening right now was previously in place. I think it's very important for the voters of the province, those people who are getting their insurance bills right now, to understand that despite the fact that the Liberal government has asked insurance companies to freeze rates, consumers are seeing increased rates because the previous Conservative government, over the course of the last year, approved increases. Despite the fact that voters were very upset about rising insurance rates, despite the fact that as we go door-to-door we hear horror stories about consumers who are not able to purchase insurance any longer because of the exorbitant cost, the Conservative government continued to approve increased rates. Those are the rates that are currently being seen.

Effective October 23, we have stopped any further rate increases. Effective January 23, insurance companies will be required to file with us their plans for rate reductions, which will average 10%. We believe that in working with the various stakeholders in the insurance industry, we can find ways to implement those cost reductions. We have received a number of concrete suggestions, and we are very optimistic that we can see an average 10% rate reduction.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I'm pleased to join in and offer comments on the insurance bill that has just been put forward by the Liberal government and would like to comment on the comments made by the member for Guelph-Wellington, who was trying to somehow blame the past government for recent increases.

I'd like to point out that the work done by our past insurance commissioner, Rob Sampson, would have had reductions in auto insurance in place as we speak, had they been allowed to be put in place. On July 2 he had made changes to the insurance regulations that would have taken several hundred million dollars in costs in the industry out of the system. Then, in late August, there were further changes made that were going to reduce the cost of the whole system by \$1.4 billion, more than the \$650 million the Liberal government is putting forward now in this Bill 5.

So what the government has done is water down the savings that the taxpayers of the province would have received, had the changes that were in process been allowed to go through. It also delayed it by several months, so there is a late freeze. There is, sometime next year, supposed to be a 10% reduction in the amount that people will pay on their auto insurance bills, when, with the savings that would have gone through had they been allowed to be put forward by the past government, good drivers would have seen a 15% reduction in their auto insurance costs, this at the same time as they're going ahead with many other tax hikes and increased energy costs as well. I'd just like to point that fact out.

**The Speaker:** The member for Oxford has two minutes to respond.



**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I'd like to thank the members for Markham, Simcoe North, Guelph-Wellington and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their kind comments to my presentation. I have some further comments on the some of the issues they brought up.

The member from Guelph-Wellington spoke about previously approved rates. As it goes through the insurance commission, of course, insurance companies must apply to increase their rates, as they always have in the past. That had been going on. That was, I suppose, what necessitated the need to deal with rising insurance rates. During the election campaign, I think it was pointed out quite clearly by the government that they were going to immediately stop the rates from going up. Then, within 90 days, they were going to bring the rates down by at least 10%. They did make the effort to immediately freeze the rates. The Premier, within minutes, I suppose, or maybe within an hour of being sworn in, said he was going to freeze the rates where they were. I was then hoping that the legislation coming forward would immediately allow the 90-day process to start and within 90 days my constituents could see at least a 10% reduction. That doesn't happen in this bill.

I also want to point out that the other thing this bill does is allow the insurance company to come forward and put forward the position that they can't provide the insurance for the rates they are presently getting. Then it allows the insurance commission to approve that rate. So, in fact, it takes away the freeze. I think that's of great concern.

1540

The other concern I have is that the bill only deals with insurance on cars; it doesn't deal with trucks and the insurance farmers and small business people have to pay. Incidentally, those rates are as much out of line as car insurance, and we are now doing absolutely nothing to deal with those.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank them for their comments and thank you for the time.

**The Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Etobicoke North—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. There's a rotation time with the NDP. My apologies.

The member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** It could happen to anyone. Thank you, Speaker.

I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this political forum. It's 20 to 4 and we're on live, happy to have 10 minutes, a mere 10 minutes, to speak to a bill of serious import. I'm sure the good doctor will be able to get his time to speak today.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** I suppose we'll do our best to say what we can in 10 minutes.

The previous Conservative speakers talked about many things, except I want to say to the citizens of Ontario that nothing they did helped you, drivers of Ontario, and nothing the Liberals are doing or will do

will help you either. And that's the dilemma. You drivers are going to continue to be whacked, day in and day out, year in and year out. It doesn't matter whether the Tories would have remained in power or whether the Liberals are in power, the result is and would have been the same: Drivers are going to get whacked—good drivers especially are going to get whacked—and you are experiencing it at the moment.

I want to use myself as an example of how this Bill 5 doesn't affect me at all. The first part of this bill says, "The bill temporarily freezes automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles at the rates in effect on October 23...."

For the benefit of some MPPs—I'm sure they have their own stories. It isn't just us; I'm sure it's ordinary folk out there. We have a little more money than most ordinary folk. My insurance rates two years ago were about one thousand, one hundred and something dollars, and last year my rates went up about 500 bucks. That was last year. I called the broker and I said, "I haven't had any accidents. I have no problems with the law. My rates went up 500 bucks"—

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** You're driving a Mercedes. What do you drive?

**Mr Marchese:** Richard, quiet down, please.

I said, "I didn't drive my automobile through some building that would have caused my rates to have gone up. It wasn't me. I didn't do anything. It's not right and/or fair that my rates would have gone up 500 bucks," a year and a half ago. They explained that it was maybe having to do with many, many issues, of course.

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** Rosario, in here, I'm looking—

**Mr Marchese:** What are you looking at, Jim?

**Hon Mr Bradley:** —for government insurance.

**Mr Marchese:** Ah. I'm getting to that, Jim. Take it easy. I wouldn't avoid that.

And so my rates this year—again, no accidents, good driver—went up from—

**Mr Patten:** Big car.

**Mr Marchese:** It's irrelevant, Richard. Tell your story when you stand up for two minutes. It's irrelevant what kind of car I've got.

My rates went up from about \$1,600 to \$2,798, and it comes into effect January 14. I'm not sure how this bill helps me. I'm not sure how this bill will help anyone who finds himself or herself in the same situation. I say to you that the majority of people driving are in the same situation. Freezing the rates has whacked me and whacked many other people like me. We're not protected at all. This is a toothless bill that doesn't help anyone, and that it should pretend to do so belies the facts. It would be wrong to say that this particular bill is helping anybody out there, because it isn't.

I'll be fascinated to listen to a number of speakers who will get up for their two minutes, or 10, and show me how they're helping me. I'm looking forward to it.

The Minister of Tourism has a book in his hands and he says, "What did you do when you were there in

1990?" He is right. We didn't keep that promise. And some of us in that caucus said that to have not kept that promise, even in and in spite of the economic recession we were feeling, and yes, even if, some of us argued, some jobs would be lost—yes, in a recession—some of us said, "We've got to keep that promise." At the end of that discussion, some of us lost and we broke that promise.

You would think that successive governments would learn from those mistakes. We did. We learned that we can't regulate this beast, this insurance company, any insurance company—the beast. They can't be regulated. Liberals tried it when Richard Patten was there in the early years of the Liberal Party. We tried it in 1990, and even New Democrats can't regulate. We can't regulate. Tories tried it. Every political party tried to regulate the insurance industry. It doesn't work.

Our rates have been skyrocketing in Ontario, similar to many of the Atlantic provinces, causing the Liberals in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to reconsider their position vis-à-vis public auto insurance. Oh yes, we have learned from our mistakes and we admit that we made a mistake. And Jim Bradley, the Minister of Tourism, can stand up and show the book and say, "Yeah, you did it." Yes, we did.

That's why I stand up here to tell you we made a mistake that cannot be repeated. Your bill to freeze rates does nothing. Even if, at some point, some of you guys can bring in another bill and say you're going to reduce the rates by 10%—my bill, up from \$1,600 to \$2,798; what kind of help are you giving me?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Sorry, Mikey. You can blame the Tories all you like, but you are not helping me one bit. I'm talking about you driving the wheels. You will be in cabinet some day, too, and you'll be driven; not to worry.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** But the approvals came before—

**Mr Marchese:** I know, Michael, I know. This is Michael Colle—through you, Chair, because I can't see you. He's a tall fellow.

It's what the Liberals are doing, not what the Tories did. What they did was bad, wrong—

**Mr Colle:** But you're paying for their sins.

**Mr Marchese:** But, Michael, I'm asking, what are you doing for me? What did you say during the election that was going to help me?

**The Speaker:** Refer to members by their riding names.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, what did he say? And you, when you were there, tell me about how you were going to help me reduce my rates. It's not about them; it's about you. You are in charge. Michael, you must remember now that you guys have the limousines. You're no longer in opposition without them. You have the limousines and you have to decide how you're going to help me.

**Mr Colle:** Correct the record. I have a Jetta.

**Mr Marchese:** That's great. You have a Jetta, Michael. That's good.

**Ms Monique Smith (Nipissing):** You haven't identified your car yet. We're still waiting.

**Mr Marchese:** My point, Madame, is that public auto insurance is the only way to go.

**Ms Smith:** Mademoiselle, please.

**Mr Marchese:** It's the only way, Mademoiselle, to go. There is no other way.

You can have all the insurance companies talk about how fraud is the big problem. Some have spoken and said, "God, if fraud is the problem, why haven't we seen thousands and thousands of prosecutions?" It's a criminal act. Why haven't we seen the prosecutions to make fraud not an issue? That's what the insurance companies say is the problem. Liberals say that's a problem; Tories say that's a problem.

Some say, "Ah, it's the stock market." And yes, we argue that investing badly in stock markets by the insurance companies is forcing me to have to pay for their problems and their mistakes. They lose money and I pay? I don't like it. I just don't like that. And I'm convinced that thousands of drivers, millions of drivers, like me say, "I don't like the fact that they play the market, they do badly and I've got to pay for them. Sorry." And then to say, "It's fraud," as an excuse? Uh-uh.

Public auto insurance is the only way to go. It works in British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It does. You'll have Tories and Liberals argue, "Oh no," but it does. There's nothing that would prevent us from bringing in a public auto insurance system that would work for us; nothing at all.

1550

I love the arguments my Tories and Liberals—when we say we can make it more efficient, we can consolidate 110 insurance companies and make it more efficient and save money. When you have an opportunity for the Tories to agree with you—because we speak the language that they normally speak—they say, "Oh no. That kind of efficiency doesn't work." The first time New Democrats say that we can consolidate public auto under one company and save money, causing greater efficiencies, the Tories say, "No. That's not good." They can consolidate all they want to save money, as they did for eight years; New Democrats can't do it. Public auto insurance is the only solution to solving the skyrocketing rates we've seen in the last eight years.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** I agree with all the members from the three sides that the insurance issue is a very difficult issue to deal with.

I appreciate the comment my friend made a few minutes ago that they tried in the past to regulate the auto insurance industry, but they failed, also the comment by different speakers from the Conservative side—from Simcoe North, from Oxford, from Parry Sound-Muskoka—that they promised the people of Ontario to reduce auto insurance by 20%. But they had more than eight years to deal with this issue and never did anything with it.



This issue only came alive around election time, and now they are accusing the Liberals of trying to play games. We know it's very difficult. We know the insurance industry is a beast; it's a strong and dangerous beast. That's why we promised the people of Ontario we'll give them a freeze at the beginning, and deal with experts later on, in order to introduce a bill—a fair one—for all the drivers across the province, not just come and deal with it without any scientific solutions. We're looking for long solutions, not a temporary solution. I believe our approach, Dalton McGuinty's approach and his government's, is the right approach to deal with this issue. Hopefully we'll see the positive result in the near future.

**The Speaker:** The member for Haldimand—

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** Halton. The great riding of Halton.

**The Speaker:** The member for the great riding of Halton.

**Mr Chudleigh:** The member speaks with great passion, and I know he believes in everything he says. It's always disappointing to me that someone who believes so passionately in what he says can be so wrong. But that's something I guess he has to live with.

He said you can't administer auto insurance. Well, in 1996, we passed Bill 59, the automotive rate reduction bill, and it reduced auto insurance rates in this province by 20%. Rates came down 20% in 1996 and 1997.

He talked about the only solution being public auto insurance. I'd like the member opposite to give me one example of what government does better than private industry does. What does government do that is more efficient than what private industry does? Oh, I know the party mantra is that someone is making a profit out of it. It's too bad profit is not a four-letter word, because it would fit with the lexicon of the NDP party. Unfortunately, it's not a four-letter word; it's more letters than that.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Be careful, Ted. Your arthritis is going to start to act up.

**Mr Chudleigh:** I keep moving, Howie. If I move, I'm OK.

What does government do more efficiently? I can't think of anything. The profit factor: most companies in Ontario could live well and make a nice return on investment, plus cut the costs of most services, just through efficiency alone, because there is so much waste in most government programs.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to congratulate the member for Trinity-Spadina for pointing out that in a number of jurisdictions now in Canada it's beyond debate that public auto insurance is the effective way to lower the cost of auto insurance for individual consumers. It's worth noting that since the NDP implemented public auto insurance in Saskatchewan, for example, Saskatchewan has had Liberal and Conservative governments, and yet those Liberal and Conservative governments have not touched the public auto insurance system. Why? Because it works effectively. In British Columbia, since the NDP

implemented public auto insurance and substantially lowered people's auto insurance premiums, they have had Social Credit governments and they now have a Liberal government, although it looks more like a Conservative government, and they all have agreed that public auto insurance is the most cost-effective and efficient way to deliver auto insurance to consumers.

In Manitoba, since the NDP implemented public auto insurance there, they've had two Conservative governments and two different Conservative Premiers who consistently have said that public auto insurance is the way to go. They're not interested in changing the public auto insurance system because it is so cost-effective and efficient in terms of providing affordable auto insurance that people can rely on. Even in Quebec, where you have a bit of a hybrid system where part of the system is operated on a public, not-for-profit basis, you had Liberal governments and you now have a former Conservative, now Liberal, Premier who also admits that public auto insurance is the most cost-effective way to provide people with auto insurance coverage. I congratulate the member for pointing that out.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** I'd like to make sure we understand that if we read the book *Rae Days*, chapter five, *Revenge of the Pink Ladies*, we will see exactly what's being said about public auto insurance.

What I also want to suggest to the members opposite is to take a look at the claim rates in public versus private auto. The claim rates are just as important as the rates to pay for insurance. We know that when it's publicly owned, those claims go way down compared to the private rates, about a \$4,000 or \$5,000 difference. So what we're telling the people of Ontario is, you're going to pay a little less, but when you make that claim you're not going to get the money you need to cover you when you injured.

The other point I'd like to make is on the BC experiment that gets referred to very often over here. Take a look at the costs to the health care system that got pushed from the private auto over to the health care costs.

Let me ask the other question that needs to be asked here: whether or not we want to create another bureaucracy that would be a little bit bigger than that of the Ministry of Health. That kind of money is what we're coming up with. Is the member over there going to tell us where that money is going to come from, when we've been saddled with a \$5.6-billion deficit already? They want to keep going further and further into debt, and what's unfortunate about that is that they seem to simply wave a wand and say, "No matter what happens, we'll just keep sucking the money out somewhere and keep putting it out there."

We're trying to attack this in a very responsible way. The balance we do is as important as it is for the claim side, as it is for the cost side, as it is for the costs to our whole system and the bureaucracy that's wanted to be created. There are so many that we are going to be putting out of work if we go to the public system. There are so many people who are going to sit back and say,



"You know what, you got injured but your claims can't go very high." So what I want us to understand is what even Bob Rae understood. Out of the book *Rae Days*, in chapter five, *Revenge of the Pink Ladies*, he makes it very clear that he understood the problem. It's too bad the members over there don't.

**Mr Marchese:** I thank all the participants. To the member for Halton, I guess it's OK to gouge the driver, because profit is not a dirty word. That's OK. Profit is not a dirty word, but you can gouge me day in and day out. That's OK, member for Halton. I remind him that rates went up 30% under his government.

To the member for London-Fanshawe, how can you say a rate freeze is responsible and fair? I just don't get it. How you can stand up and defend that is beyond my comprehension. I was telling you my bill went up from \$1,600 to \$2,700, and you're telling me that's fair and that's responsible? You people are living in a different world.

**1600**

You attack public auto insurance because we would be creating another bureaucracy. It's amazing how Liberals and Tories can argue when New Democrats want to bring efficiency, proficiency into the system by consolidating the 110 private insurance companies into one single company, by making it work where so many insurance companies are crying foul every day, saying, "We're not making any money." I say to them, "If you're not making any money, get out of the way. The government would be happy to run it". It would pay for itself; it would be as cheap as it is in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I'm telling you, even the leader of the Liberal Party in Alberta is talking about public auto insurance. Check out his Web site. He understands the politics of it. He knows that if you want to be able to control rates, there is no other way.

Liberals and Tories can attack a government-controlled public plan that would be cheaper, but they're wrong. Drivers in this province know that their rates are skyrocketing, and they won't take it any more and they won't accept it from you either, Liberals. They didn't accept it from the Tories, and they won't accept it from you.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North):** It's an honour and privilege for me to speak to Bill 5 regarding auto insurance. I thought before engaging in some of my substantive remarks, I'd like to deal with three Tories and the NDP—not that dissimilar to Three Weddings and a Funeral.

I'd like to start by addressing the remarks of the MPP from Parry Sound-Muskoka and some of the fuzzy logic or Enron-style economics that they're really engaging in. First of all, as the Premier mentioned earlier today, it seems a number of the Tories have found religion. It seems it's only nearing an election campaign or shortly thereafter that they realize all these initiatives that will actually help the public and in particular the motorists. I remind this chamber and I remind Ontarians that for eight

years the previous Tory regime stood by and allowed increase after increase to accrue to the motorists of Ontario.

I would like to compliment the MPP for Oxford, because he quite rightly recognized that it was the Liberal government, upon taking office formally on October 23, 2003—within minutes, as the member quite rightly pointed out; literally speaking, 15 minutes—as the first official act of this government, brought forth the beginnings of this legislation.

I'd also like to recognize that the MPP from Halton was straining a bit, I thought, when he was trying to recognize his own government's record in this area and had to go back all the way to 1996, when there was at least some progress in the area of auto insurance. I'd like to respectfully remind, the MPP from Halton, as well as this chamber and Ontario, that it was under the Tory regime that increase after increase was allowed and tolerated. To be very specific, as of September 30, 2003, the increase in the last year under the Tory regime was 19.4%. To extend that term two years was 33.7% and to extend that for three years was 42.7%. That's really the record that they should be sharing, and I commend him for digging into the archives. That must have been a museum-level search, perhaps an archaeological dig by the Tories to actually bring forth any progress they may have made.

To deal specifically with the theatrics, generally very well received, I would say, by the MPP from Trinity-Spadina, I had an opportunity to actually define the word "theatrics," and I'm glad he's continuing in that vein. I would like to first of all acknowledge a particular piece of vocabulary that seems to be his favourite word for the day and that was, I say with respect, "whacked."

I agree with him that he is in fact whacked in various ways, both his logic and the tenor of his arguments, and I would also say, looking back to the old days, the Rae days, the grand old days of the promises made and completely broken, reneged upon by the Rae government with regard, for example, to public auto insurance—he very rightly said, and I quote, "Nothing you did helped Ontario." Whereas he was trying to direct that, I think, to others, I would like to hold up a mirror to him in that particular statement and say that's precisely the Rae government, while on their watch—and I would like to say, with respect, that the MPP from Kenora-Rainy River was there at the cabinet table for that particular discussion.

For the eight million motorists of Ontario who deal with the 110 auto insurance companies who suffer through the 250,000 collisions that are experienced by the motorists of this province, I think they're really pleading ignorance and pleading a learned helplessness. The MPP from Trinity-Spadina, whereas he's generally not claiming helplessness broadly, seems to be pleading a learned ignorance or a learned helplessness in the auto insurance sector, saying that it cannot be regulated.

I would like to say with respect to this chamber, to you, Speaker, to my colleagues and also to the people of



Ontario and to my constituents in the great riding of Etobicoke North that, as the government, we have been entrusted with the fundamental responsibility, a moral enterprise, to deal with these very difficult issues. I believe the phrase "the beast" has been used. That's precisely what our government has attempted to do, and I would like to remind the chamber and the people of Ontario that that occurred within 15 minutes or so of taking office.

Again to really set the tone, what exactly are we attempting to accomplish? As we were campaigning in our own respective ridings through the length and breadth, one of the issues that was brought forth repeatedly was the fact that a segment of the eight million motorists of Ontario in each of our ridings was really hurting, was complaining about the endless increases. That's why it's a proud moment for us as a government, moving forward, trying to honour those deep commitments that we've made, that the McGuinty government is actually delivering on this particular promise, helping to begin the initiatives, the first steps to lowering auto insurance rates and protecting Ontario consumers.

I would like to respectfully remind the MPP from Halton and others in this chamber that it was really the Tories, who it seems are recently finding religion, who sat by after increase after increase was allowed. First of all, to recall for a moment the actual phraseology, the words, the statement of this bill, I would like to read it once again, even though it has been read formally by Deputy Clerk Deller: "An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates." The word "temporarily" is of note. This allows us approximately 90 days in which further increases are not going to be allowed, in order for us to move forward with future legislation.

I was having a conversation this morning with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, Mike Colle, who assures me that steps are being taken to move on this file to actually bring to bear the full weight of the Ministry of Finance. In particular, there have been a number of meetings with the stakeholders that are involved, including the motorists of Ontario, as well as the many insurance bureaus and auto insurance companies that are in force that are operating in Ontario. To do what? To actually bring forth legislation on our commitment, to move forward with the 10% future reduction in auto insurance rates.

As has been mentioned, this is a beast. Our government has been very instrumental in working and bringing forth legislation to move immediately. Why? To make good on our commitment, as well as to protect consumers of Ontario, something that was not done within eight years on the Tory watch.

I thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak on the auto insurance bill.

1610

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for his

comments on the bill. He seemed to spend a lot of time with a Shakespeare-like performance in order to discredit the honourable members on this side of the House and their record on auto insurance. But the record is clear that it was this party that brought in Bill 59 in 1996, which led to a reduction to the tune of 20% in the cost of auto insurance in the province of Ontario. What they're trying to do here is to deflect any real scrutiny on what their bill doesn't do. They're purporting to freeze rates on insurance in the province of Ontario with a proposed future reduction to the tune of 10%, but the bill is so full of holes that it will accomplish very little. It is simply a way of placating the electorate into thinking that this government is actually doing something with the auto insurance file in the province of Ontario. But in fact, they're admitting—and he used the words himself, "the beast"—that they don't know where to start with the auto insurance situation in Ontario. So they're coming out with this bogus, empty bill that is trying to give the impression that they're very actively looking for solutions in the auto insurance industry when in fact they really don't want to tackle it because, as they say, the beast is bigger than them.

I think what we're going to find in the fullness of time as this bill evolves—and as they said, they brought it out within 15 minutes of the throne speech. Within 15 minutes of that, it was pretty well discredited by everybody who looked at it.

**Mr Marchese:** I've got to admit that I was almost crushed by the weight of the substance of the arguments presented by the member from Etobicoke North. In fact, I was trying to exfoliate the substance of the arguments. I could find so little. I'm not quite sure what he said. In the end, I think he said, "Look at the bill; it says temporarily frozen"—ie, the rates. That's the substance of his argument, that the rates are temporarily frozen. God bless you, member; I didn't read that carefully, but I'm happy you added to the substantive arguments presented here. Yes, we know the rates are temporarily frozen, and yes, I'm telling you that you haven't helped me one bit. You haven't helped one driver one bit. They're all experiencing incredible increases. Mine went up by over \$1,000 this year.

**Interjection:** It's because you drive a big car.

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** What do you drive?

**Mr Marchese:** No, my brothers and sisters, it's not what I drive that matters; it's the fact that insurance rates are skyrocketing. Brothers and sisters, you can smile all you want, but it's about the fact that you Liberal folk think that by saying, "We've frozen the rates," you've helped me. You haven't helped me one bit.

The other substance that I could discern after exfoliating the man's argument is that he talked to Mike Colle, the PA, and Mike assures him that they're going to deal with this, that they are committed to this and that they are bringing forth instruments, presumably, or are instrumental toward bringing change. There's nothing here. The man can enlighten me when he speaks again,



but there was no substantive argument he put forth except that the freezing of rates doesn't help me and doesn't help you, and that talking to Mike Colle is not going to help me, not now and not in the future.

**Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** I'm happy to enter this debate to talk about the freeze on automobile insurance rates. I was listening intently to the member from Etobicoke North. He made some very interesting points.

As a person who was out door-knocking in September, I ran into a lot of constituents at the time, when I was a city councillor, who were absolutely distraught at the way insurance rates were going. I found that I probably responded far too emotionally, because I too was experiencing the kind of rate increase that many parents of teenagers experience.

As the mother of three teenaged boys, I have a true appreciation of what insurance rates can do. They escalate year after year. I remember listening to George Smitherman, who was then going around the province listening to people and educating candidates on what kinds of things influence our insurance rates. I remember thinking how complex and how out of control the premiums had become and wondering why nobody had addressed this issue.

I am pleased to be in this House. I am pleased to be in the job I am in now, to be able to go back to my constituents and tell them that we are responsibly taking on this issue. We're brave enough to tackle something really difficult on their behalf, to tackle something that prevents people in the 905 area from even getting insurance. They're not able to legally obtain insurance because of their skyrocketing costs. We're prepared, as the government, to take responsible, timely action on this issue.

**Mr Dunlop:** It's a pleasure to rise again this afternoon and make a few comments on the speaker. In my years in municipal politics and in small business over the last 15 or 20 years, I've watched with a lot of interest all the different debates over the years on the auto insurance industry and tax rates. We've heard the no-fault and we've heard the proposals, the public insurance system, from the NDP. We ran into problems, obviously, about a year ago now, when rates started to get high as a result of a lot of reasons. I understand, and you and I have had this discussion, Mr Speaker, that many of those same concerns we have are worldwide concerns. That's not uncommon today. If you talk to people anywhere in the world, you will find that insurance is an issue on any of the continents.

However, if the public in Ontario believe this is the saviour of the insurance industry, I think they're going to have another thought. The citizens of the province are being told now that they're going to be guaranteed under an election promise that they'll receive a 20% decrease in their auto insurance rates, and I look forward to that.

It will be really interesting to come back into this House next April and May and see what has actually happened to auto insurance rates as a result of all the

studies and the standing committee or the select committee that's going to go out on the road and resolve all the problems in this industry. I look forward to those results, but I just want to tell the public here in Ontario, don't hold your breath on this. This may be just another broken promise and we won't see the 20% rate reductions. Time will tell, but I think we'll know by next April or May.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Etobicoke North has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Qaadri:** First of all, I would like to call attention to the remarks by the MPP from Trinity-Spadina. He seems to be stuck on the cover page of the bill, focusing on the word "temporarily." I would invite him to actually open up some of the various pages, in particular section 4, page 2, in which, for example, one of the provisions is that any future increase by the 110 auto insurance companies would have to be officially OK'd, authorized by the superintendent of financial services, and they would have to actually show just cause.

I would like to say, with respect, that typical of the NDP, recognized or not, it seems to be really a call back to the Bob Rae days. They promised public auto insurance, and they were willing to create a bureaucracy that would exceed the size of the Ministry of Health. That seems to be their general solution.

I would also like to say, even though I think they are attempting to impugn the reputation of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the MPP from Eglinton-Lawrence, Mr Mike Colle, that he has been extremely busy meeting with stakeholders, meeting with motorists, meeting with affected groups to actually move forward and bring forth proposals and future legislation to make good on our commitment to a future 10% reduction. He keeps asking what the government has done for him. This is the first step. Again, it's something we acted upon, a commitment, within 15 minutes or so of taking office.

The honourable member also used the word "exfoliate." I would like to say that the arguments, exfoliated as they are, naked as they are, are the straight goods and are for the benefit of Ontario motorists. Thank you.

1620

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Hon Mr Bradley:** Tim, did you want the copy of Rae Days?

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I thank the member from St Catharines for the offer. I read it, actually, and did enjoy the book. It is on the shelf.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** Chapter 5.

**Mr Hudak:** I remember chapter 5, but do you know what? I'm not concerned about debating chapter 5 of Rae Days today. I understand that the NDP's position today is for public auto insurance, and that's what they're bringing forward in debate. The Conservative and Liberal parties believe in market forces, that by changing regulations in terms of how payments are made, how people are assessed and treated, they can relieve pressure, and then



the market, through competition, will deliver savings to customers across the province. I think that debate was relatively clear during the election campaign.

I think what will be surprising to folks now, several weeks into the Dalton McGuinty mandate, is that the promised—and I do recall the promised 20% rate reduction in auto insurance within 90 days of taking office. Whether that's actually going to happen or not—you know, maybe I'll give Premier McGuinty and his team across the way the benefit of the doubt. Ninety days have not passed so far. But certainly, whatever the trigger date was, if it was October 2 when they won the election—

**Mr Chudleigh:** October 23, when they were sworn in.

**Mr Hudak:** October 23. Nonetheless, in the new year it will either be a New Year's surprise to see whether rates actually do come down 20%—I've got to tell you, they have some time, but I'm suspicious. I'm doubtful.

**Mr Chudleigh:** We're hopeful.

**Mr Hudak:** I'm hopeful for our constituents, for those people who have come into my office, constituents who have seen their auto insurance rates rise. They say, "Do -- you know what, Tim? Dalton McGuinty promised me my rates would go down by 20%. Dalton McGuinty promised that he'd get into office, he would freeze rates, my rates would come down by 20%, but my rates have gone up. So did he mean somebody else?" I say to them, "Well, let's give them a chance." Dalton McGuinty promised a 20% reduction in auto insurance rates. He has until some time in January to see if that will come true, but I don't believe it. I'm suspicious.

I'll tell you why. In terms of the way this government has chosen to approach issues on the whole, reflected in Bill 5, it has shown two types of retreats, retreats in areas where Dalton McGuinty made promises during the election campaign, I think with no intent whatsoever to really keep those promises. I hate to be cynical about it, but I think we have seen that demonstrated; for example, the oft-made pledge that he would not raise taxes across the province of Ontario when in fact the second bill they introduced in the Legislature was the biggest tax increase in the history of the province, number one on the hit parade. We used to talk about how Bob Rae or David Peterson increased taxes—nothing compared to Dalton McGuinty's tax hike home run that he brought in with the second bill.

There's another kind of retreat that I don't think was forced by their view of the state of the economy. I think that Dalton McGuinty as Premier is showing an inability to back up his word, to show the backbone that's necessary to be a successful Premier in the province of Ontario. Whether folks agreed with Mike Harris's policies or not, you knew that he stood behind what he believed, that he was a strong leader. To date, I'm not seeing that reflected in Premier McGuinty's decision-making.

The Oak Ridges moraine, like the auto insurance bill, is similar. He made very strong promises, even when he became Premier, that he was going to freeze development on the moraine. But whether out of inexperience, naïveté

or because he did not have the forcefulness of negotiation, they've actually stumbled into a deal that's going to result in significant development of land in the Seaton area and the Pickering agricultural preserve. I think McGuinty is bargaining from a position of weakness. He doesn't have the strength to stand up to the developers and carry through with his promises.

On a similar issue, negotiations with the federal government, I would argue that the old man in Ottawa, Jean Chrétien, swept the table in his negotiations with Dalton McGuinty. I would not want to be there. I think it would be an ugly sight to see McGuinty playing poker with Chrétien, because he got taken. He said he was going to go in there and negotiate all this money for SARS, and he took a bad deal that puts more challenges on the finances of the province of Ontario. Again, whether it's inexperience or naïveté or, as I think, strength of character, he was unable to stand up and keep his promises.

That's why I think that this auto insurance Bill 5, the Automobile Insurance Rate Stabilization Act, which I would call the No Rate Cuts for Drivers Act, is another example of a retreat by the McGuinty government from campaign promises. I think it's an inability to stand up and draw the line in the sand and say, "This is where I stand," because we have seen retreat after retreat after retreat. Not only are we seeing broken promises that affect the pocketbooks of taxpayers across the province of Ontario, we're seeing broken promises because this Premier does not have the backbone to stand up for what he attests he believes in.

I believe it was in August 2003 that our former colleague Rob Sampson, our insurance commissioner in the previous government, who knew this file inside and out and did an excellent job and who was assisted quite ably by Ted Chudleigh, the member for Halton, who is going to speak on this bill a bit later and provide some background on this—I remember Rob Sampson brought in some changes. I'm trying to remember; my notes remind me about \$1.4 billion in costs that were reduced from the industry.

Some of the new members may not have been following politics closely at this time. In 1996, I believe, Mr Speaker—you were certainly here at that time as well—we brought forward changes to reduce auto insurance rates by double-digit figures. They had accelerated through the early to mid-1990s. We demonstrated that we were as good as our word. We brought in the important changes and reduced those rates by 12.5%. Subsequent to that, with pressures through health costs, I believe, and some report costs, legal costs, rates had gone up again and started taking away that 12.5% or whatever it was, the double-digit savings.

So Rob Sampson, who had helped out on the original bill, went to work with Ted Chudleigh and others and found about \$1.4 billion in savings, which we believe would have translated to—what?

**Mr Chudleigh:** Ten to 15, depending on what company.



**Mr Hudak:** Thank you, sir. Between a 10% and 15% rate reduction. Those regulations were brought forward and filed, but unfortunately, whether it was the timing of the election, the civil service did not want to bring these things forward until the election was decided. Those rate reductions had not yet taken place for the new filings.

I think it's a shame, but there was certainly that opportunity for the McGuinty government to at least bring those things through to give immediate rate relief to families across the province of Ontario. Whether that's because of partisan reasons, whether it's a pettiness, that they didn't want to say that the previous government had some good ideas—I'm not sure why they rejected that. But they basically put that 15% reduction that families could be expecting on the shelf, gathering dust, and brought forward their own bill, which does not deliver on a 20% rate reduction. It simply freezes rates in place, at an unsatisfactorily high level.

I would suggest that to the members, to get the dust off that 10% to 15% rate reduction in the changes we had brought forward and put them into action. It gets them half or two thirds of the way to Dalton McGuinty's promise to reduce rates by 20%. So I want to encourage that, bring that to the debate today. Even if they're not a particular government's or party's ideas, sometimes those ideas can still be put into action. Witness the question from Mr Hampton today with respect to the labour inspectors, who had been hired under our government, which the new government is claiming credit for. Great. If you want to claim credit for our idea of a 15% rate reduction, go ahead. It helps to bring those savings to taxpayers across the province of Ontario.

In my last minute or so on this particular bill, if we look back on the package of bills that have been brought forward in this Legislature, I talked about the theme of how Premier McGuinty seems to be retreating from difficult decisions and breaking his word as Premier. The second item is, what is this going to mean to the pocketbooks of taxpayers in Erie-Lincoln and Niagara and across the province of Ontario? Well, they're likely going to be seeing, in my estimation, higher auto insurance rates, and certainly not the 20% reduction they may have been budgeting for, and secondly—another one of the broken promises of Dalton McGuinty—higher hydro rates on our seniors and on our small businesses across the province of Ontario, and of course higher taxes that have kicked in already or higher taxes coming on January 1. I suspect that we'll see soon, either in the economic statement or an upcoming budget, another massive Dalton McGuinty tax grab. So not only are we seeing broken promises and a withering of the word of the Premier of the province of Ontario, but it's going to impact directly on the pocketbooks of working families in the province. I certainly will not support this bill.

1630

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Marchese:** I want to say to the member from Erie-Lincoln that nothing you guys did helped drivers, nothing for eight years. Under you folks, rates went up 30%.

Please. I do agree with you, however, that nothing that the Liberals have presented here so far is going to help drivers. This tax freeze hasn't helped me with an additional \$1,000 that I'm going to be paying for my insurance, and won't help millions of other drivers out there at all.

I want to remind the member from Etobicoke North about section 6, which he made reference to and which I had very little time to speak to. That section says, "if the insurer believes it is just and reasonable in the circumstances having regard to the insurer's financial circumstances," then the insurance company can keep hiking the rates.

They will do that. They will hike the rates. I have never seen an insurance company saying, "I'm making loads of money. Don't worry." Every insurance company in the world always says that they're a hair away from bankruptcy. Sorry. They're all going to come to the superintendent and say, "I'm broke, and if you don't help me, I'm out, I'm gone." That section is there for the insurance company, not for me and not for you. This is a loophole designed to allow the insurance company to make sure that it continues to get the money it wants. That's why Peter Kormos called it the Mack truck loophole, the Boeing 707 loophole. It's a loophole that helps no one except the insurance company. The freeze on rates doesn't help you and doesn't help me one single cent.

**Mr Ramal:** First I would like to thank my colleague from Etobicoke North for his articulate and eloquent speech while he was describing the insurance policy and talking about it in detail.

I also want to go back to the various members from the Conservative Party when they start talking about the insurance policy and talking about how they were going to reduce it by 15% and how they in 1995, I think, with Bill 59, were going to reduce it by 15%. My question is, what happened to that bill? How come it was not implemented? How come the insurance went back up again?

I'll give you an example. In 2002, it went up 9.2%; in 2003, some 20%—another increase, another increase. Within the last three or four years, the insurance went up more than 30%.

What did they do about it? A few days before the election they came up with a plan to have insurance reductions, just for the election. When the elections happened, nothing happened.

**Mr Marchese:** But we have the answer now. They've frozen the rates.

**Mr Ramal:** That's not just the answer, freezing the rates. I want to ask my colleague from Trinity-Spadina to go back to the bill and read it carefully. It seems like, as my colleague from Etobicoke North said, he's reading just the cover. He's not going into the details. We said we are going to tackle the issue in detail. We are going to go step by step. It seems my friend from Trinity-Spadina has a sensitivity to companies making a profit. He forgets that we live in a capitalist society. We have—everyone



has—a right to make a profit in order to continue in business, but we would apply a fair game for both sides.

**Mr Yakabuski:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Erie-Lincoln for his deeply considered comments on the issue. He's demonstrated a significantly clear understanding of what's been going on in the auto insurance industry in this province for many years. I want to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina and the member from London-Fanshawe for their comments.

Of course, the auto insurance bill they're proposing they're calling the bill to temporarily freeze rates—temporarily freeze rates. When I'm driving down Bay Street and I come to a red light, I temporarily stop, but shortly thereafter, I'm off and running again. It is a temporary freeze they're talking about, but it's not significant. It will not stand up. Shortly thereafter, the rates will rise again, because this bill doesn't address them. The loophole they've granted in section 6—and my colleague from Trinity-Spadina articulated that himself, that it leaves a loophole the size of the Taj Mahal to allow the insurance companies to apply for significant rate increases because they've been stricken with hard times and they're not making a profit serving the insurance needs in the province of Ontario.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Yakabuski:** Well, I can tell the honourable member from Simcoe North that my rates have increased as well, and not due to any kind of problems in my driving record, I can assure you.

This bill just won't cut it. It's false. It's a fallacy. It's going to fail.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** I found the remarks to be interesting.

**Mr Marchese:** Do you have a quote for that too?

**Hon Mr Bradley:** I have a quote. The quotes my constituents are getting now are quotes in fact from the Tory days. People are saying, "You're going to freeze the rates"—yes, we have—"as of a specific date." Unfortunately, when the previous Conservative government was in power—and I'm not trying to be partisan; I'm just trying to be factual now—they approved a number of rate increases that are now showing up as we have renewals of these particular policies. So I'm saying to them, "After we have our freeze in effect, you will find that these rates will be frozen, first of all, and second, you're going to see a rollback coming in the months to come." But what I want to point out to them is that the present increases are—I hate to use this—Tory increases. They are ones that had been approved when my good friend from Erie-Lincoln was an esteemed member of the cabinet. He probably spoke against it and said, "Please don't allow these to be approved now, because whether we're the government or a new government takes over, there are going to be huge increases." I admire him for saying that behind the closed doors of cabinet, as I'm sure he did.

I don't want to say anything about the NDP, other than that the book I have is called—this is a commercial for Tom Walkom; he used to be here—Rae Days. It's chapter 5, and it's called "The Revenge of the Pink

Ladies." It describes how they were moving forward with dispatch toward implementing public auto insurance, and then came Honey Harbour, September 6, 1991, and the matter was completely dropped. And I am sorrowful for that.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Hudak:** Thanks to my colleagues from Trinity-Spadina, London-Fanshawe, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and St Catharines for their comments on my speech.

Just a quick response to the member from London-Fanshawe. I asked what if the bill in fact passed and the regulations were put forward. You now have the opportunity to put those into action on the insurance filings, which could bring, we estimated, about 10% to 15%. But you may not know this, because your cabinet ministers may not have told caucus that that's a possibility.

1640

I suspect that one of two things is going to happen. Those reductions, which could be the law of the land in the province of Ontario today if you weren't taking this partisan approach, will stay on the shelf. Potentially, you may dust them off, put a red ribbon on them, bring them forward in the new year and claim them as your own—and obviously, I would like to see the rate reductions for the constituents of Erie-Lincoln; or, I suspect, you will not, in fact, bring forward rate reductions as Dalton McGuinty and his candidates promised in the most recent election.

There's that old expression, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." We have certainly heard when it comes to hydro rates, we have certainly heard when it comes to the Oak Ridges moraine, we have certainly heard when it comes to taxes, and we have certainly heard on the softening of the so-called hard cap on class sizes that what Dalton McGuinty said in the campaign is not what Dalton McGuinty is bringing forward as Premier. I think this is the oldest, most cynical trick in the book: to promise one thing in an election campaign and do something else once you're in power; to try to buy votes, and at the end of the day throw all those promises out the window. Whether Dalton McGuinty thinks he can live with the reputation of a promise-breaker remains to be seen.

I think there's something second to that. I think not only is that affecting pocketbooks, but I think it demonstrates that as Premier, Dalton McGuinty lacks the backbone to make the tough decisions that are necessary to keep a strong province like Ontario prosperous and growing. We have just seen too many retreats, not all of which are related to financial circumstances, that I think indicate a serious character flaw in this Premier in his early days in office.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Scarborough Southwest.

**Mr Berardinetti:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd like to start off by congratulating you on your position as Deputy Speaker. I don't think I had the opportunity to do so publicly, and I wanted to congratulate you.

I'd like to start off where the previous member just finished off.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Berardinetti:** I want to ask the member to listen a little bit to what I have to say. He doesn't have to listen to all of it, but if the member for Erie-Lincoln would give me the courtesy to say a few things, I think he'd find it quite interesting.

I had really no intention to seek higher office and to go into provincial government but for the fact that we had in the Liberal Party a leader like Dalton McGuinty. Contrary to what the previous speaker said about Mr McGuinty, I think the opposite is the exact truth and was my main motivation for seeking office. Mr McGuinty has demonstrated time and time again a tremendous backbone, a tremendous willingness to make tough decisions and a tremendous willingness to do what may at times be unpopular.

We take, for example, the whole issue of Pickering and the energy issue and the introduction of a bill just recently by the energy minister to deal with the energy problems in this province. They were tackled very quickly, within weeks of this government being formed.

This bill that we're debating today actually had its germination—its seeds were planted the same day the Premier was sworn into office, on October 23, 2003, less than two months ago. After that swearing-in, where I was present, as many others were, he and his cabinet met, and he gave direction to the Minister of Finance to immediately freeze auto insurance rates.

I'm new to this Legislature, so you can call me a rookie, you can call me a newcomer, you can call me someone who's green here, but my understanding is that most governments take some time after they're voted into office to actually come into this Legislature and to begin bringing forward laws. The Liberals were elected on October 2, 2003. The Premier and his cabinet were sworn in on October 23, 2003—that's 21 days after they were elected. Action was taken on auto insurance 21 days after the election, which, to me, is unprecedented. I don't know what the Tories did when they were elected back in 1999, and how much time they took after their election to come into this House and bring forward legislation. I don't know, with all due respect, what the NDP did when they were elected.

**Mr Marchese:** I'll tell you.

**Mr Berardinetti:** Well, we'll wait for your two minutes, because I would really like to know. I'm new to this and I'd like to know what the NDP did after they were elected, if they did act very quickly.

Our leader took very decisive and quick action on something that is very controversial. The bill in front of me today and the bill that we're debating is called An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles and to provide for the review and regulation of risk classification systems and automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles. First reading: November 26, 2003.

In my view, this bill is very straightforward. We are moving to freeze auto insurance rates. We are moving to have public consultation to engage the public in looking at solutions to a situation and to assist on what is dysfunctional and is not working. We all admit that here, whether we're Tory or NDP or Liberal: The system is broken. The system needs to be addressed, and the question is, how do we address it? The Premier and the finance minister did the right thing by immediately freezing the rates. They also came forward very quickly with this bill to look at ways of engaging the public and ultimately freezing and rolling back insurance rates on automobiles.

The great majority of my constituents in Scarborough Southwest use automobiles at some point or other in the course of their day, whether it be to go to work or to pick up their kids from school or take their kids to school or to go out shopping. There are a lot of streets out in Scarborough Southwest, and a lot of people use cars. During this recent election campaign, many people at the door said to me that they wanted some action taken on auto insurance and auto insurance rates. We could have come back into this House and I could have been answering my constituents' calls saying, "You know what? We'll do it some time in January. We're tired. We had a tough election. We thought we were going to have the election in June. We thought it was going to be in May. It ended up being in October. We want a rest." But we didn't.

**Mr Levac:** Who chose that day?

**Mr Berardinetti:** The Conservatives, for some reason—the leader, Mr Eves, decided not to hold the election in May or in June but to hold it instead in October, very close to the municipal elections. He did that partly because he believed that there was a crisis with SARS and that there would be some sort of a problem holding the election in the spring.

So we held off. We continued working hard. We remained diligent and we stuck to our message. We went to the polls on October 2, and the people heard our message. Overwhelmingly they wanted change. They wanted to see a government that was going to take action and not talk. This government has taken tremendous action in the course of just a few short weeks; very quick action. I wait for the replies from the other members, hopefully honest replies as to what their governments did shortly after they were elected back in 1999 and in 1995 and back to 1990. But as far as this government is concerned, we have acted very quickly.

The key to this, in my view, is the fact that it involves public engagement. We have brought this bill forward. It's being debated here in the House, but we are also engaging the public to look for a solution. We're not imposing or saying that we have all the answers. We are willing to listen to the public and to come back with some suggestions. Maybe my friend from the NDP will say, "It has all been done before; it doesn't work; you're wasting your time; rates keep going up regardless; you're not addressing that concern." But with all due respect, I will say that we are addressing those concerns and we are



trying to find an answer to a very difficult problem. It's not easy.

1650

In my honest view, public insurance is not the way to go. It's not something I'm just saying as the member from Scarborough Southwest or as a member of this Legislature; it's something that Bob Rae said back in 1990: "It won't work; it'll cost too many jobs and it's too expensive." If Bob Rae couldn't do it, who can? Why would Howard Hampton or the present NDP be able to do something that Bob Rae and the NDP government could not do in 1990?

We need to be very sober and serious about this. The Premier clearly has taken a very firm, very serious and very candid, and perhaps somewhat vulnerable, look at this, because in the end some of the comments that are going to come back in this consultation process will not be favourable. But the bottom line is that we are going to get that feedback, we are going to bring forward proper recommendations, and I am convinced that at the end of all of this we will have a system in place that will benefit the drivers and the public in Ontario. It won't be something that will satisfy just the insurance companies or one particular group of individuals; I think it's something that will satisfy all drivers in Ontario in the best possible way. We do not live in a perfect world, we never will, but this act goes in the right direction and will do the right thing. That's why I support it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate the member's comments. I have one question that I've not heard answered adequately by the government side. Mr Smitherman, the member for Rosedale, the current health minister, had done consultations in the run-up to the campaign, I think in the spring and summer, province-wide consultations to get input on where to go with auto insurance rates and the changes to bring about. In fact, there was a detailed plan brought forward at that point in time. It could have been just a cynical ploy to try to generate some controversy, to try to win support for the Liberal Party. I don't think that was the chief goal of the member. I think he was honestly trying to get input on how to wrestle down auto insurance rates.

What I don't understand is, what happened to the Smitherman report? Where did it go to? In the throne speech they talked about the burning thing in the basement; maybe it was his report that was on fire. Instead, they've frozen the rates, with a vague promise to deliver savings of less than 20% in the new year, and are sending out Mike Colle to do new consultations and new hearings. So where did the Smitherman report go? I suspect that this government has a tremendous incapacity to make difficult decisions that are necessary to run this province. I think they saw the weighty decisions that were necessary to get auto insurance rates under control and they balked. They were afraid to make the tough decisions in this respect. Instead, we have this delay mechanism, and I suspect at the end of the day, in reality we're not going to see that 20% rate decrease that was

promised by the previous government. Maybe they will bring forward in debate on this bill later on what in fact the health minister brought forward as advice on rate reductions, but I can't understand for the life of me why it was not part of this bill.

**Mr Marchese:** The member for Scarborough-Southwest talked about this bill going in the right direction. I've got to tell you, it's not going to the right; it's not going to the left; it's not going anywhere. You talk about the Premier taking firm action, decisive action, even vulnerable—I guess you'd be attacked by somebody. I don't know by whom. It's no action at all. And then, when you say, "We froze rates immediately and we could have frozen them in January," you make it appear like you've done something extraordinary. I don't get it. The rates have already been approved, member for Scarborough Southwest. My rates have gone up a thousand bucks.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** That's a Tory rate.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no. And you've got to remember this, you and Jim, the Minister of Tourism: You are driving the limousine now. You can attack the Tories and the New Democrats all you want, you can make reference to Bob Rae, you can do all you want, but in the end it no longer matters. What matters now is that you are driving the limousine. Your promises are now under the microscope. It's what you're doing. Your promise to freeze rates helps no one.

It's your section 6 that allows rates to go up: "if the insurer believes it is just and reasonable in the circumstances having regard to the insurer's financial circumstances." It's got to mean that rates are going to go up, because insurance companies are always a hair away from bankruptcy. I'm telling you, Lorenzo, this bill does nothing; it does absolutely nothing. It's going in no direction, and your consultation—having the PA go around as opposed to George Smitherman, the now Minister of Health—is going to lead to nowhere. Nowhere.

**Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans):** I participated in the consultations carried out by Minister Smitherman prior to the election. Bill 5 is a much-needed piece of legislation that will go a long way in bringing insurance rates in order. The freeze authorized by this bill will go a long way in protecting our families from these increasing insurance rates that we are all very aware of. This legislation will permit us in the future to roll back insurance rates for passenger car vehicles. Rate increases last year of approximately 20%, and over 30% the last two years, are just unacceptable and are not within the means of drivers in Ontario.

Bill 5 will bring stability to auto insurance. The Liberal government will deliver the reductions that we had promised. We will continue to work toward lower insurance rates in Ontario. The solution will be one that the public and the industry can accept. This government has taken action. It is important that this bill proceed, and we will deliver that stability to the families of Ontario who need this stability. That was clearly shown as we

went around this province during the campaign. Insurance costs were out of control.

**Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton):** It's interesting to hear people debate this particular subject. I think as the debate goes on, and I've listened to it not only today but other days, people should realize that the answer is not going to be a government fiat saying, "You are going to charge this or that." It's going to be a collective solution with government, regulators, industry and consumers getting together to figure out what's wrong with the present system.

We already know what's wrong with the present system to some degree. The previous government had begun to take significant steps to address some of the problems. Fraud: something like 10% of the cost of our insurance system, some \$700 to \$800 million. That's why, as a former Ministry of the Attorney General, we created some special crown prosecutors to deal with fraud in this whole area.

One of the fallacies with regard to Bill 5, though, is that it holds out to the public that it actually is a solution to the problem. It doesn't do anything. I don't know whether to vote for it, against it or stay seated in my chair because, quite frankly, you're voting for nothing. This bill doesn't create any new powers for the Ontario government to do anything. They have all the regulatory powers in their hands now to do what they claim they're going to do under this bill.

I think that the debate we've had is of some value, perhaps, to the members and to the public, but this bill, truthfully, does nothing. It really allows and holds out in a false way that this government is doing something about this when in fact they're doing nothing.

1700

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Scarborough Southwest has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Berardinetti:** I would like to thank the members from Erie-Lincoln, Trinity-Spadina, Ottawa-Orléans and Lanark-Carleton for their remarks.

In closing, I just want to reiterate two central points. First of all, I think this government has acted very, very rapidly. The question that I asked earlier has still not been answered. I was hoping to get the question answered by either my Conservative friends or my NDP friends as to how quickly their governments were able to respond to this issue, especially after they were elected. We came back into the House within a month or so after the cabinet was sworn in and shortly after the election. We moved very rapidly.

With the greatest of respect to my friends across from me here, I would say that we have acted quickly and this bill does have teeth. Just look at section 12, providing for offences. I'll just read it:

"12. Every insurer that does any of the following is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable on a first conviction to a fine of not more than \$100,000 and on each subsequent conviction to a fine of not more than \$200,000:

"1. Contravenes either section 7 or 8.

"2. Fails to comply with an order of the superintendent made under section 11."

This, to me, shows clearly that this act has very strong teeth, and is giving the superintendent the power to say no to an insurer who comes to that superintendent and tries to increase rates. This act freezes the rates. This act engages the public in dialogue. This act, in my view, is the only solution and the best solution to a problem that needs to be corrected.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Chudleigh:** As the member for Erie-Lincoln said earlier, "It's another day, another broken promise." It's an immediate freeze on auto insurance—well, sort of. It's an immediate freeze until January 23. That's not very far away. Up until that time, I guess we can say that maybe there will be something that comes in that will reduce the price of auto insurance. I would like to think that would happen, because I like to think that we are all honourable members in this House and that we all have some integrity.

That was the election promise after all, that rates would be reduced by 10% and, to be specific, there would be another 10% reduction with some reduction in coverage, if you so wished. I don't know if that reduction in extra coverage would cover the injured person or the driver of the car, but however that would work, there would be an option out there for a 20% reduction. That 20% reduction has been hedged on by the members opposite. And would the clock start ticking on that 20% reduction or the 10% reduction from the company's last fee increase or would it be from October 23, when the government was sworn in, or would it be from October 2, when the election was made? When does the clock start ticking on the 10% rate reduction, or the 20% reduction? We know that the freeze started ticking on October 23 of this year. Of course, it's a 10% cut in 90 days from an insurance industry that is rapidly going broke in this province—they're not making any money.

You wonder what happened to the rest of the promises that the Liberals made during the election. They talked about protection against unjustified rate increases. That was something they wanted to bring in immediately on their election. Having read this bill, there is nothing in there—not one thing. That could be a bit of a backtrack on a promise that was made. At least it has been put off into the future some time, if it ever comes back at all.

They also said that they were going to do away with the designated assessment centres—independent groups who assess people who are injured in automobile accidents. They were going to refer those people to the family doctors and let them assess and coordinate the care for rehabilitation that these people needed.

There are other jurisdictions that do that. Whenever that has been put in place in other jurisdictions, it escalated the cost of recovery for those people. That, of course, will be something that this government probably will not do, so we can expect that the demise of the designated assessment centres is perhaps premature. I think they may be around for some time to come.



They also said they were going to implement a pre-approved framework for injuries. That's a great election promise, because we did that about a year ago. That has been in place since last spring, I guess it was, about eight or nine months ago that we brought that in. It's a beginning.

Whiplash type injuries—or WAD Is and WAD IIs, as they're called—were brought in in the spring. That's a system that has been working extremely well and has been saving companies and saving money in the process. More importantly, it got treatment to injured people more quickly. It's a proven fact, in WAD Is and WAD IIs—whiplash type injuries—that the faster the treatment takes place, the more successful the recovery. A pre-approved process is something that saves money and decreases the recovery time of injured people and brings them back to normal in a much faster way.

They also said they were going to reduce excessive court costs in the insurance business. Having gone through this bill, I don't see anything that refers to court costs at all. There's just simply nothing in the bill. That may well be another promise that is falling on the floor of the dustbin of promises that the Liberals have made over their exuberance to get elected in the last election.

They also said they were going to eliminate fraud and conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest—I assume they were talking about doctors who own DAC centres. A doctor who saw a patient would refer them to their physiotherapy clinic. That clinic would go through a number of treatments for that individual. Sometimes it was perhaps seen to have a conflict of interest. The package of regulations that we introduced—I think we passed them in August of this year—eliminated that conflict of interest possibility so that a doctor could not refer to a clinic that he owned.

The elimination of fraud, as the former Attorney General pointed out just a few minutes ago—when he was Attorney General of this province, he designated 10 prosecutors to look at the prosecution of people involved in fraud in the automotive industry. That is going down the road.

I'm not sure that, given what human nature is, elimination of fraud would be a reasonable goal. Certainly the reduction of fraud and the lack of giving people a free ride as far as deceptive tactics in the business might be concerned is very, very important. Again, I don't see anything in this bill that would work in that way.

They also said that they would protect and reward safe drivers. In my time as parliamentary assistant to finance and in dealing with automobile insurance, I talked to a lot of people about their insurance rates, about their personal driving habits and their personal driving assessments. Every single one of them, regardless of their driving record, thought they were safe drivers. They may have had a ticket or two, or they may have even had an accident. Some of them had two or three accidents—none of them their fault, of course: “The guy in front just stopped too quickly,” or, “The speed limit changed from

80 kilometres an hour to 60 kilometres an hour; didn't notice it; got a ticket for 30 kilometres over; my insurance rates go up.”

**1710**

Well, things on the road that you don't notice dictate as to what kind of driver you are. But certainly protecting safe drivers and rewarding safe drivers is a very important part of any insurance program, to ensure that they are not punished and they continue to have incentives to drive safely and drive with caution when they are on the road. I don't see anything in this bill about that either.

They also said they were going to appoint an auto insurance watchdog. That's something that would need some legislation and a few regulations. They could do it by regulation, I suppose, but you would think that if they were going to do it, they might put something about that in this bill. I don't see anything in this bill about appointing an auto insurance watchdog. We have an auto insurance ombudsman now. I don't know how a watchdog differs from an ombudsman. Maybe with a watchdog you scratch up alongside the ear and he kind of likes that.

**Mr Hudak:** I like that too.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Yes, I like getting scratched up alongside the ear.

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** Let's not get into that.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hudak:** We got their attention now.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Yes, nobody's yelling at me yet.

There is nothing about that in this bill, and that's disappointing.

Then a big thing in the election campaign was a rate shock protection plan. That's a great clause, “a rate shock protection plan.” Of course they went through September in the election talking about a rate shock protection plan. In the first piece of legislation that they bring in regarding auto insurance in this province, is there anything to do with rate shock protection?

**Mr Hudak:** At a guess, no.

**Mr Chudleigh:** You'd be right. My friend guessed no, and he's right.

Finally, they were going to identify \$650 million in industry savings. That's what they guaranteed to do during the election. You know what? A rate freeze ain't going to do it.

There are about six or eight broken promises in this bill alone to go along with the broken promises on the Oak Ridges moraine, the no tax increases, the hydro, whacking the seniors every time we turn around. It's just a litany of broken promises fulfilled even more strongly by this legislation.

**The Acting Speaker:** Comments?

**Mr Hampton:** I'm always pleased to be able to comment on speeches by some of the Conservative members because, having been in government for eight years, they should know that they re-regulated the auto insurance system in 1996. In 1996, we heard glorious speeches from Conservative cabinet ministers saying that the re-

regulation of the auto insurance industry that they were putting forward in 1996 was going to be a permanent solution, that auto insurance rates would drop, would remain consistent and that this was the ultimate answer, the final answer. Just as Liberals are now trying to do, the Conservatives re-regulated the auto insurance industry in 1996. The auto insurance industry laid low for about six or seven months—12 months in some cases—and then, lo and behold, people started getting those big rate increases again. That happened for a while, and then—I think it was Sampson, wasn't it?

**Mr Chudleigh:** Sampson.

**Mr Hampton:** Yes, Minister Sampson, who then started shopping around another re-regulation scenario in about 1999, I believe, and so some more re-regulation was engaged in and it was supposed to do it.

Then as we got ready for this last election, the Conservatives floated another re-regulation idea that was supposed to solve auto insurance. Now we have the Liberal government promoting yet another re-regulation of the auto insurance industry. I predict you'll have the same fate that they had: It won't work. These guys are too slippery for us.

**Le Président suppléant:** Merci beaucoup. Questions et commentaires ?

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** Merci, monsieur le Président. Je dois vous féliciter pour avoir soulevé quelques points en français, tout d'abord.

Mon collègue de Halton vient de mentionner que nous n'avons pas tenu nos promesses. Je peux encore une fois, dire que le gouvernement Dalton McGuinty démontre que les promesses que nous avons faites durant la campagne, nous tenons à les tenir. Nous nous rappelons très bien que le 23 octobre on avait dit qu'on ajouterait un gel sur le renouvellement des polices d'assurance. Il a été fait 15 minutes après l'assermentation.

Nous avons aussi dit que 90 jours après l'assermentation, il y avait la possibilité d'avoir une réduction de 10 %, et allant même jusqu'à 20 % si nous rencontrons tous les critères qui seraient établis. Mais je dois dire que le parti au pouvoir—je ne me rappelle pas le nom ; on me dit que c'était les Tories qui étaient là anciennement—a fait tout genre de promesses. Aujourd'hui, si on fait face à des difficultés avec nos assureurs, c'est dû à la position prise par l'ancien gouvernement, qui a appuyé et octroyé les augmentations auxquelles nos assureurs font face aujourd'hui. Ils n'avaient qu'à appliquer pour une augmentation 45 jours avant le 23. Dû au fait qu'on avait dit que nous procéderions avec un gel, on a demandé des augmentations, et puis le gouvernement conservateur a approuvé ces augmentations.

Je vois aujourd'hui que les personnes reçoivent leur renouvellement des polices d'assurance qui sont datées rétroactives du 6 octobre leur autorisant une augmentation allant jusqu'à 30 %. C'est injuste.

Puis nous n'avons qu'à nous rappeler que le gouvernement du temps du NPD avait mis sur pied plus de 100 bureaux d'évaluation de taux d'assurance-auto qui

coûtent au-delà de 100 \$ millions aux assureurs d'autos. Aujourd'hui, on a bel et bien dit que ces bureaux, nous allons les annuler.

**Mr Runciman:** I want to compliment the member from Halton, Mr Chudleigh, and his comments here this evening—insightful as always—and to relay the message to his constituents, who certainly are not strangers to his competence and his willingness to work hard on their behalf. That was reflected in the results of the provincial election.

We all know this Liberal legislation is a sham. It's a sleight-of-hand; it's a shell game. I will speak to that a little bit later.

I want to comment on the intervention by the leader of the NDP, though. I find it passing strange, especially when the leader stands up to comment on auto insurance, given the track record, the history, of the NDP government with respect to this issue, especially since the honourable member was a member of the cabinet that made a decision to walk away from what was the cornerstone of their plank in the election platform. They walked away from it; they abandoned it. They made a complete 90-degree turn here. The leader can stand up here today and try to suggest to the public that this is a new day. If he had any honour at the time, any integrity at the time, if he believed so strongly as he's trying to suggest he does today and in the last election campaign, he should have resigned. He would be held in much higher esteem today if he had acted in the responsible way.

I still recall the member's comments in the dying days of the election. He said the Conservatives were burnt toast. Well, the results show that we may have been toast, but there's the burnt toast right there.

**Mr Levac:** I appreciate the opportunity to offer a couple of minutes on this debate.

One of the things that some of the people are talking about is the differences between public and private, and also the theme that's going on from the members on the other side of trying to paint this into anything other than a good first piece of legislation. To imply that nothing else is going to be done in this portfolio is not accurate. What we are trying to portray on this side is that we are going to work with the people in the province of Ontario to ensure that these issues get laid out properly, fully vetted with the people of Ontario. All of the stakeholders who are involved in this—we took 17 different communities across the province—and that piece of paper is in the hands of the parliamentary assistant who is dealing with these issues.

1720

This first piece of legislation is an extremely valid one, one that sets the tone to the rest of the people of Ontario that we've heard the message loud and clear. Quite frankly, across the country everybody is quite aware that it did create, and could have created, some chaos in different governments across the country. The people who were not paying attention to their portfolios almost lost their governments. It could have defeated



governments across this country for not paying attention to it.

To the credit of each and every one of the parties in this place, everyone recognized it was an issue that needed to be dealt with. Why and how and when it was going to be dealt with is the difference between each of the parties.

One of the things that I want to make sure I point out again and again is that when you go to the public system, you are looking at claims that are an awful lot lower than those in the private sector because of the way in which the system works. It's easy to say, "We want to keep those prices down," but then if you go public all the way, what happens is the claims also go way down. In terms of the private sector, when you make sure that it's done properly and efficiently across the country, then those claims are there for those who need it the most. So let's be careful before we go down that public discussion road again.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Halton has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Chudleigh:** I appreciate the member for Kenora-Rainy River and his comments. He pointed out that in 1996—it might have been 1997—that we made promises that we would deliver a 20% reduction in insurance rates to the people of Ontario. My gosh, what happened? Let me see. A promise was made and a promise was kept. Insurance rates went down 20%. Do you remember when that used to happen in Ontario, that when a promise was made, a promise was kept? That was our motto.

I thank the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. Keeping those promises is a very important thing. I'm sure we have you on record now, Jean-Marc, that you believe that the promises will be kept. That's what you said. You're a man of faith. For your sake, Jean-Marc, I hope it happens, because I know you are a man of integrity. I just have a few suspicions that you may be disappointed in that. However, we have until January 23 to realize that 10% reduction in rates. I'm right there with you. I'm hoping that we're going to get there too, as I'm sure of all of the motorists and drivers in Ontario are hoping with us.

The member for Leeds-Grenville, thank you very much for your kind remarks, kind comments.

**Mr Hampton:** He wasn't kind.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Well, he was kind to me, Howie. He wasn't kind to you. Unfortunately for you, the member for Leeds-Grenville has a very good memory, and it goes back a long way in this House. I'd also like to thank the government whip. His comments were that they are consulting. I don't know what happened to the Smitherman report, where they consulted on auto insurance for some time before the election. According to your comments, I have to suspect that you were unprepared for government.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Hampton:** I'm pleased to take part in this debate. Let me say at the outset that we recognize that the cost of auto insurance in Ontario is a very serious problem and

that the escalation of auto insurance rates in Ontario is a very serious problem from one end of the province to the other. I want to lay out why I believe public auto insurance is the best way to address this problem, and why New Democrats from one end of Canada to the other, from British Columbia to Nova Scotia to Newfoundland, and in Ontario, support public auto insurance, why public auto insurance is a better deal.

The first reason that it's a better deal, that it will allow us to reduce rates, is because you take the profit out of the system. It's very clear that private insurance companies want at least a 15% profit range. So 15% of the auto insurance rate, in effect, is the profit factor. We say that insurance, whether it's for truck or car, is almost essential nowadays for people to take part in the economy. There are a few cities where the transit system is so good that you don't need vehicular transportation, but those are really very few and far between. Auto insurance has really become essential to participate in the economy. For that reason, we believe we should take the profit factor out. Doing that would allow us to reduce rates by 15%.

The second thing that a public system will do: Right now in Ontario we have over 100 insurance companies. That means 100 separate corporate offices, 100 different computer and databases, 100 sets of corporate pay schemes, all very high, which again adds a lot of money. Implementing a public system, we would have one insurance company, one data bank and one set of executives who would probably be paid far less. By reducing that duplication which exists a hundredfold, we would again be able to reduce costs significantly, and therefore reduce rates.

Third, in the current system a lot of money gets eaten up by marketing. You've got 100 different advertising and marketing costs. And a lot of money gets eaten up in what are called transaction costs. Three vehicles in an accident: insurance company A spends a lot of money trying to pass the cost on to insurance company B, which spends a lot of money trying to pass the cost on to insurance company C. With one company those marketing costs and those transaction costs are eliminated, which further allows you to reduce rates.

Then there's the fourth part. As we know, in the auto insurance system every insurance company has to keep a pool of money in the background called the risk pool. It has to be sufficient to cover them in case there is a range of serious accidents or there is a range of serious problems. In Ontario today, with over 110 insurance companies, you have literally 110 separate risk pools.

**Mr Marchese:** Reserve funds.

**Mr Hampton:** Reserve funds. In a public system you combine that. By combining it and by government standing behind it as the guarantor, you can significantly reduce the amount of money that has to be dedicated to reserve funds and dedicated to risk pools. By reducing that, once again you can pass on to consumers a significant cost reduction.

That's the essence of public auto insurance. That's why we so strongly support public auto insurance,



because it will allow us to reduce auto insurance premiums by at least 20% on an ongoing basis. The Consumers' Association of Canada's report confirmed that.

One of the things I face in the riding I represent is that many of the communities in my constituency are along the Manitoba border. On a consistent basis I see young people graduating from high school, and many of them will go to the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg or Red River College in Winnipeg, and they'll come home at Christmastime after having been there for basically four months—the end of August, September, October, November and part of December. Lo and behold, they have Manitoba licence plates on their car. You know why? As soon as they get home, they sit down with their parents at the supper table and explain why. They explain to their parents that auto insurance under a public, not-for-profit system in Manitoba costs them half of what it currently costs drivers in northwestern Ontario. For younger drivers, male drivers, single drivers, it's less than half; in some cases it's a third or a quarter of what they're forced to pay in Ontario. Yet Manitoba has had a series of Conservative governments that have come along after the NDP implemented public auto insurance in the early 1970s, and two Conservative Premiers have said, "This system works. We're not going to do anything to interrupt it or interfere with it. It works for consumers. It works in terms of insuring people properly."

I heard the chief government whip say a while ago that not as much money is spent on claims. You know what? In public systems not as much money is spent on claims. Your cost of settling claims is a lot less. You don't end up arguing between insurance companies. There's no incentive to argue between insurance companies, there's only one insurer. So you don't have to spend a lot of money arguing back and forth between insurance companies. You don't have to spend a lot of time marketing. You recognize the loss and you pay the loss. That of course is what the Consumers' Association of Canada confirmed: that in a public system, more of the premium dollar goes, in fact, to dealing with the legitimate needs of the insured driver. Less of it is spent on overhead; less of it is spent dickering back and forth between conflicting insurance companies; and more of it actually goes to deal with the injured driver or the accident victim.

1730

This has been confirmed time and time again. I remember before the last election in British Columbia, the BC Liberal Premier muttered that he thought he was going to privatize certain sections of auto insurance there. Well, he found out very soon from people that people were quite opposed, so now you have a Liberal Premier of British Columbia who fully endorses the public auto insurance system.

You've had Liberal Premiers in Saskatchewan elected since the then CCF/NDP implemented public auto insurance in Saskatchewan in 1948 who have said that this is a system that works well. It's very cost-effective;

it's very efficient; it's very good at ensuring that injured drivers and accident victims are properly compensated.

Now we have the former Mulroney Conservative and now Liberal Premier of Quebec essentially saying the same thing in Quebec: that Quebec's hybrid system, where it is partially public and private—he agrees with the public part of the system. It works. It's very cost-effective, it's very efficient, and it provides auto insurance at much lower rates than we see here in Ontario.

Recently, the Liberal leader in Alberta became a convert to public auto insurance. He has said that he knows what you're going to find out. He knows that the Conservative government in Alberta has tried to regulate and re-regulate the private auto insurers. It works for about a year, maybe 18 months, and then the private auto insurance companies find ways to slip out from under the regulation and they find ways to raise rates. So, the new leader of the Alberta Liberal Party has said very clearly that public auto insurance is the way to go. This is so essential for people now, it is so important in terms of allowing people to participate in the economy, that it ought to be a public system; it ought to be provided on a not-for-profit basis. That is the reliable way to ensure that people have affordable auto insurance.

I'll make a prediction for you, and you should read the experience of your Liberal and Conservative colleagues in some other provinces. In Nova Scotia, in the minority government they have there, the Conservative government with the support of the Liberals decided they were going to pass rate cap legislation. What happened after they passed rate cap legislation? Two of the biggest auto insurance companies said, "We're not going to write auto insurance in Nova Scotia any more."

It doesn't work. The auto insurance industry will find ways to slip out from under the regulation or they will stop writing auto insurance contracts and then put you in a really difficult spot.

The reason that the auto insurance companies say that your legislation is OK for them is because you've allowed them a loophole that you could drive a convoy of Mack trucks through. They won't have to slip around the legislation; they'll be able to drive right through it and increase auto insurance rates.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** As my friend opposite has indicated, the government does understand the need to get control of auto insurance costs that are skyrocketing across the province. In fact, auto insurance rates have increased out of control, with an over 8.2% increase over the past two months.

I guess the difference in perspective from this side of the House to that is that we also understand that auto insurance payers are consumers, are people in this province who need jobs. When the NDP formed the government in 1990, they reneged on what was a crucial promise in their campaign, and that was to put in public auto insurance. I would remind my friend across the House that the reason they reneged on that promise was because it would cost too much money and it would cost



too many jobs. A government-funded study at the time said that public auto would cost over \$1 billion to implement. Certainly we are not, in this province, sitting on \$1 billion of excess funds waiting to spend them on the implementation of public auto insurance. Additionally, NAFTA provisions now could lead to further costs.

The fact that auto insurance premiums are increasing, according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, are things like fraud, health care costs, litigious environment. Those issues will not be remedied by the implementation of public auto insurance.

We're committed to reducing the costs for consumers. Bill 5 is a first and necessary step to freeze those costs with a further commitment to have reductions over the next 10% across the board with a further 10%. That's why I'm supporting Bill 5.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** I'll speak briefly on this in response. I did speak on the bill last week. On public-private, what we're really talking about is state automobile insurance, which the leader of the third party is speaking about. If the NDP had its way, we'd nationalize the telephone company; we'd nationalize the gas company. They feel that the state can run enterprises better than the private sector. I think that has been shown over the years to be inaccurate.

There is a legitimate debate between no-fault and fault systems. Members should know that we have had no-fault provisions in Ontario since about 1970. It is a successful system. Unlike Quebec, we have a compensation system in tort that shows respect for children and other innocent victims of motor vehicle accidents. To hear the Quebec system praised is appalling. That system is inhumane; it is unconscionable for injured, brain-damaged children and others. At least in Ontario we show respect for the dignity of individual human beings. That's what tort law is about: looking at the individual who suffered harm innocently in a motor vehicle accident and compensating them adequately and individually for that, which isn't done in the province of Quebec.

We do have our no-fault provisions, which are important as well. I say to members, this bill does nothing about any of that. This bill really isn't very important. Let it happen; it's not going to make much difference. What will make a difference is that, as the government reviews this in the next few months, they maintain that balance between no-fault and tort, and get rid of transactional costs and high costs, paid not to victims but people who render services in the automobile insurance sector.

**Mr Marchese:** If we had it the way the member from Whitby-Ajax would have it, we would be selling off Hydro One, selling off the generation of power. He certainly would sell off the LCBO if he had an opportunity. If he was the leader he would have sold that off because that earns \$1 billion for the province, to be able to do things we want. If we had him in power, imagine what he would sell off. Everything public that works would be gone. All of the private interests would be there, just licking their chops, saying, "Man, oh man, do we love this guy from Whitby-Ajax."

What puzzles me, however, is when I hear the Liberals resist, reject, mock the efforts of our leader and all of us as we try to defend auto insurance. That's what puzzles me, because these are the Liberals with a social conscience, you see. These are the people who care about the little guy. These are the people who care about the drivers out there who are being gouged by the auto insurance.

Their response is Bill 5. What does it do? It freezes rates temporarily and offers up section 6, which allows the insurance companies to plead, "Bankruptcy is coming. Please help; we've got to get our rates up." That's all your bill does. Your bill does nothing for me, who has seen a \$1,000 increase this year and a \$600 increase last year. Nothing for me and nothing for thousands and thousands, if not millions, of drivers in Ontario. This bill offers nothing to consumers.

Why, even the Consumers' Association of Canada, the section in British Columbia, is saying, "Public auto is the way to go." We recognize that it's the only answer to the gouging of drivers by insurance companies. Regulation doesn't work and it doesn't work with anyone, including and especially the Liberal Party.

1740

**Hon Mr Bradley:** I always wondered, and maybe the leader of the New Democratic Party can tell me today, why he didn't implement it. I was reading *Giving Away a Miracle: Lost Dreams, Broken Promises and the Ontario NDP*, by George Ehring and Wayne Roberts. It makes reference to the fact that my good friend Mel Swart said the following in his pamphlet. Swart "pointed to the electoral problem the NDP would now face. 'The NDP was elected to power because the public expected us to be different.... They believed that we were a more grass-roots democratic party. They expected us to keep our promises. They thought we would put the public good ahead of wealthy vested interests. They thought that we have the political courage to proceed with our program, even though they may have disagreed with some of our policies. Now, all those beliefs are in shambles. There's no doubt that we are paying a heavy price with disillusionment and angry NDP members and an electorate which now feels that we play the same old political games as the other' two 'parties.'"

He was talking about not bringing in public auto insurance. I understood the difficult decision the member had, the member for Welland-Thorold, now Niagara Centre, who's here. It says in here he wasn't necessarily in agreement with Bob Rae on this particular issue.

The Rae days—this is the final thing that happened. I know the present leader of the NDP was a prominent and powerful member of cabinet. The final situation came to this: "But on September 6, 1991, all of this was a long way away. Back at Honey Harbour, key aides—including Rae policy adviser Ross McClellan—met to discuss the aftermath of the announcement. At one level, there was a sense of relief; at least a decision had finally been made on the troublesome insurance issue. But then someone asked a question: 'If we don't do public auto insurance,

what will we do? What will people remember us for? What will be our signature?"

"Around the room, there was a dead silence. No one had thought of that." Indeed.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Kenora-Rainy River has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to thank members for their contributions. Let me respond, if I may. To the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, first of all I believe you said a lot of litigation, a lot of health care costs and then fraud. You know what? If you were to go back and read Monte Kwinter's speeches from 1987, 1988 and 1989, when he was the Liberal cabinet minister who was trying to regulate this industry, he was getting the same nonsense from the auto insurance corporations. He said the solution is to bring in no-fault; take out the litigation. So litigation is 90% gone, but what does the auto insurance industry trot out still? They trot out litigation. You already dealt with litigation. That was part of the first regulation effort. Then they always trot out fraud.

But you know, if an industry is so fraught with fraud, why do these companies want to continue with it? If they're constantly dealing with fraud, why would they want to stay in the industry? If they're losing so much money, as they say they are, why would they want to continue to have the industry? I would suggest that if there's some fraud here, a lot of it is in the arguments of the auto insurance corporations.

Now let me respond to my friend from St Catharines and simply say that I was one of those, along with the member for Niagara Centre, along with the member for Nickel Belt, along with the member for Trinity-Spadina, who said very clearly at the time that the decision not to do public auto insurance was wrong. In fact, those who set up the cabinet meeting at that time knew that some of us felt so strongly about it that they ensured we weren't there for that retreat, that some of us were off at the federal-provincial justice—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Further debate? The member for Peterborough.

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. First of all, I'd like to congratulate you on your appointment. You have a long, distinguished career in the Ontario Legislature and it's fitting that you're sitting in the chair.

We've talked a little about leadership. I heard my friends across the aisle in the Conservative Party talk about leadership and backing away from things. When I was a city councillor in Peterborough, I clearly recall the former member for Nipissing, Mr Harris, who looked straight into the television camera after he was asked a question by Robert Fisher from Global, I believe, about hospitals in Ontario. The member for Nipissing said, "I have no plan to close hospitals in the province of Ontario." And what did he do? Shortly after becoming the Premier of Ontario, he set out his pit bull terrier, Dr Sinclair. I was on a hospital board in Peterborough—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Leal:** I hear the member for Ajax. I always remember what John Diefenbaker used to say: "Big-game hunters are never fooled by little rabbit tracks."

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Member for Peterborough, take your seat, please. I would ask the House to maintain order while the member for Peterborough has the floor.

**Mr Flaherty:** Get your facts straight.

**Mr Leal:** I do have the facts straight. They're talking about the Premier backing up. I just want to say that he former Premier, the member for Nipissing, had a bit of history of backing up too. I just wanted to get that on the record.

Let me continue on auto insurance. I believe that Bill 5 is an appropriate step to start the reform of auto insurance in Ontario. As the then Liberal candidate in the riding of Peterborough, I had the opportunity to host the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale at a forum in Peterborough to give people who were involved in the medical side of the industry and people who were involved in the insurance side of the industry, along with people who pay their premiums, an opportunity to come forward and really have some input on auto insurance and how it might evolve in Ontario. Not only did I have the opportunity in Peterborough, but I went to my friend, and now colleague, the member for Northumberland to have an opportunity to have a second round of the Smitherman round table to get input on auto insurance. Indeed it was a public process, not something that was hidden behind closed doors.

Speaker, you'll remember that when the former government had the secret deal to pay highly paid professional athletes in Ontario and give them a special deal on their employee health tax credit, the cabinet ministers of the day said, "Oh, my goodness. I didn't know anything about that. I wasn't there for that." It wasn't a very transparent process when they were in power. We had an open process with the round tables in Peterborough and Northumberland. The information that we collected in the Smitherman report is now becoming part of the basis, I believe, for when the member for Eglinton-Lawrence starts to come forward with some changes to auto insurance in Ontario.

I'm an optimist by nature; I'm a real optimist and I came here because I am an optimist about the future of Ontario and the future of how we're going to provide auto insurance to many of our citizens. Indeed, through the work that's been done by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, plus the work that was done through the open houses, the town hall forums for the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, I think we'll have a package, when we come back in March, and through the process in January, to really reduce those insurance rates by the amount that we claimed during the campaign.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Leal:** I can't believe they're yakking over there. Look at the Tory record: the fourth quarter in 2002, a 9.2% increase; the first quarter of 2003, a 7.3% increase;



the second quarter of 2003, an 8.5% increase; and the third quarter in 2003, up to just two months ago, an 8.2% increase. When I've had constituents in Peterborough call me, I tell them that they've got to understand the facts: There were a number of rate filings slipped in by the previous government, and the premium increases they're seeing right now are a reflection of filings that were filed during the previous government. They had no intent to bring lower insurance rates to the province of Ontario.

Now let me talk about—

**The Acting Speaker:** Will the member for Peterborough now take his seat. Thank you.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4, 2003, I am now required to put the question.

On December 1, Mr Colle moved second reading of Bill 5, An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles and to provide for the review and regulation of risk classification systems and automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Those members who are in the favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	

**The Acting Speaker:** Will the members who are opposed to the motion please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Wilson, Jim
Eves, Ernie	Martel, Shelley	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hampton, Howard	O'Toole, John	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 64; the nays are 26.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4, 2003, this bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** The member for Oak Ridges has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today on the Oak Ridges moraine by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I want to say, first of all, how disappointing it is to me, and I'm sure to people who have been watching the proceedings here in the House over the last number of days—the reason that I asked for this opportunity, which is not in the normal course of doing business in this House, Mr Speaker, as you are well aware, is because since we came together in this Legislature and a new government took over, I have repeatedly made appeals to the Minister of Municipal Affairs to answer direct questions that I have put to him relating to the Oak Ridges moraine, a public policy issue which is extremely important, not only to my constituents but to constituents across the GTA and, of course, across this province.

Once again today, I put a question to the minister which really was not a very complicated question. It was very simply: Does the minister have knowledge of the money that it's going to cost the taxpayers for the deal that he has apparently entered into, because an announcement was made to the public? The minister takes great pride in having added to the deal that the former government made relative to the Oak Ridges moraine. My question was very straightforward: Does the minister have knowledge of the valuation that has been placed on the lands to be involved in this exchange, and can he inform the House as to what, in fact, it's going to cost the taxpayers to enter into this deal?

The minister stood in his place twice—first, in response to the initial question. I repeated; I tried to clarify; I tried to give the minister an opportunity to better understand my question. He stood in his place to respond to the supplementary. Once again, Hansard will show that neither did he respond to the question; he in fact went on to talk about other issues that really had nothing to do with what I asked him. So this is an

opportunity for us in the House, for me, as a member of this Legislature, to put it to the minister one more time.

We will be listening carefully—and, I remind the minister, so will people observing the proceedings here. They will be looking for this answer, Minister. Do you have personal knowledge of the valuation that has been placed on the land that you say is being exchanged for some 50 acres in Richmond Hill to expand the park? Are you personally involved in those negotiations?

I put it to you that I believe you owe that explanation to the people of this province. You, sir, I recall well, made accusations of the former government that somehow there was a secret deal that was entered into. Now you're the minister. You, no doubt, have access to all of that information. I think it is important now that you disclose that secret deal, if in fact there was one, because you challenged the previous government to do so. I now say to you: If in fact there was a secret deal, put it on the table. Reveal to the people of this province what that secret deal was. If you couldn't find a secret deal, having taken over as minister, then I think it's also important that you let the people of this province know that there was no secret deal. In fact, the deal that was made was good for the environment; it was good for landowners; it was supported by environmental groups such as STORM. There was a great deal said about how we have achieved a balance in ensuring environmental protection as well as property rights.

So I ask that now, when the minister stands in his place, that he specifically respond to the question that I put to him.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs has five minutes to reply.

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** Of course, we do know what the sorry Tory record is on this whole matter. It all started with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Act some time in 2001. We didn't know that at the same time a deal was negotiated with the developers that in effect would allow them to build up to 6,000 units of housing on the Oak Ridges moraine. This was not something that was known when the Oak Ridges Moraine Act was passed. So you allowed 6,000 units to be built on environmentally sensitive lands.

What we did upon assuming government on October 2 was to renegotiate a better deal than the deal you negotiated by reducing those 6,000 units that were going to be built on the moraine lands to something like 5,100 units. We were able to negotiate 900 units out of that. As a result, the parkland, especially around the kettle lakes that the member is very familiar with, will have much greater protection than was the case before. Not only that, but the developers of that area also have agreed to contribute over \$3 million to the development of that park. And of course, as a result of the moraine corridor being widened, it's better for the environment; it's better for the wildlife etc.

What did the developers get for the reduction of 900 units? They got lands in the Seaton area on a value-for-value basis. As has been stated in this House on a number of occasions in the past, it still remains to be seen exactly how many acres they're getting for this value-for-value land exchange.

That's the whole story. You know that as well. You're the member for the area. You were a member of government. You darned well know what all the permutations and combinations of the particular arrangements were.

The bottom line is this: Those moraine lands are protected to a much greater extent than they were under their deal. Whether you call their deal a good deal or a bad deal really doesn't matter. We do know one thing for sure, and that is that the deal we made is better than their deal because there are going to be fewer homes built on that land than before.

That is the totality of the situation. How much land the developers will be getting in Seaton, in the Pickering area, remains to be seen once the value-for-value negotiations are completed. We expect those to be completed some time in the spring. At that point in time, the entire deal, the entire arrangement, the entire amount of land that was given up on the moraine lands for the lands in Pickering will be known and will be made public.

**The Acting Speaker:** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until a quarter to 7 tonight.

*The House adjourned at 1814.*

*Evening meeting reported on volume B.*



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Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 9 December 2003**

**Mardi 9 décembre 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2003, on the motion by Mr Caplan that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration as early as the first sessional day following passage of this motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** When we were last discussing this issue Mr O'Toole had the floor. He's not here, so now we ask for further debate in rotation. The member for Guelph-Wellington.

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. First of all, let me congratulate you on your election to your new role.

Normally, I would say that I am pleased to rise and speak to the motion; however, I must say that in this situation I'm really more aggravated than pleased, because this is probably the silliest debate I have ever taken part in. The idea that we have to have a debate about whether to have a debate to debate the speech from the throne is just mind-blowing; quite boggling. In 15 years as an elected trustee serving as a politician, I have never had a debate over whether to have a debate before. This is really quite astounding. I don't know—well, I do know why we're in this position.

I think it's worthwhile to let the public know what the history is, a little bit about why we're here. I may be a rookie MPP, but I have on various occasions attended the throne speech as a guest and sat up in the gallery. Just as somebody who has observed the process on a few occasions, I know that the Lieutenant Governor comes in and sits in the Speaker's chair and gives the speech from the throne, and normally the Lieutenant Governor leaves, which he did on this occasion. Then we have a little formality which arises from the fact that we have a British parliamentary system and originally there were two tiers: there was a House of Lords and a House of Commons. The Speaker of the Commons says, "I have a copy of the speech. Would you like me to read it to you, House of Commons"—or in our case, Legislature. Because the Legislature has just heard the speech, the Legislature says, "Dispense. We've already heard the speech. You don't need to read it again." What happened

this time? Someone from the NDP yelled out "No" and we had to have the speech read two times.

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** It was Peter Kormos that did it.

**Mrs Sandals:** Was that who it was?

*Interjections.*

**Mrs Sandals:** Oh no, he was abusing the British parliamentary process.

We had the second version of the speech from the throne. What would normally happen, for the viewers, is we would have the tabling of Bill 1 and then we would have a motion that says, "We'll debate the throne speech on the next sessional day, the Monday following." What happened? Again, the NDP said no. So here we are tonight. We are having a debate on whether to have a debate on a throne speech that took place two or three weeks ago.

**1850**

In all the time that I've been a politician, I would never have gotten away with this silliness. If I had been a school board trustee and somebody had said, "Let's debate this; let's debate whether or not to debate," we would have gotten laughed out of town. But not here. Why are we in this mess? We are in this mess because the NDP lost two seats and they've been sulking, quite frankly, ever since. Because of that, we are in this situation tonight.

Now, I would dearly love to debate the throne speech, but to debate any further on whether or not we should have a debate to have a debate is a total waste of time, and that ends my comments.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** It is remarkable that this is being debated. I'm not aware of this ever happening. It certainly hasn't in the 15 years I've been here, and the real old guys who've been here can't remember it happening either.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Real old guys.

**Mr Kormos:** The real old ones, yes. They can't ever remember this happening. Look, I was hoping for the government to screw up a little bit, but in my wildest dreams, I didn't think they'd give me the entrée, the entry point, the opportunity, if you will, not only to have the—well, the throne speech, we knew, was going to be read twice. What did you think we were going to do? For Pete's sake, we weren't wearing our little choir uniforms. Those weren't halos you saw over our heads. What did you think we were going to do? Of course.

Was there any effort to circumvent that? Was there any effort on the part of the government House leader to display an amicable, amiable rapport with New Demo-



crats so as perhaps to avoid the sort of utilization of the rules by the New Democrats on that day? I don't recall one.

Perhaps I had messages on my phone that I neglected to pick up. Perhaps Mr Duncan had been calling me all day, saying, "Pete, I think we should sit down and talk." I don't know, because things were screwed up, of course, from the move. I know our e-mails got a little fouled up and stuff like that, but I'm pretty sure, because I didn't see any of those messages from the volunteers who take messages—because of course we have no caucus staff. It makes it a little more difficult, and that way, we've got to be more cautious. We've got to be careful we don't get hoodwinked by the government.

I don't want this caucus to be hoodwinked, right? To be bushwhacked? So then I've got to read the rules, and I've got to be hyper-cautious about ensuring that there is compliance. Otherwise, it could be a trick. We've got to be very careful about getting tricked by the government House leader. So just to be sure, we didn't want to give unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the throne speech, to be sure, in case it was a trick.

You see, the sad thing is, this isn't the only motion of its sort. This is the second motion of its type. This is the cleanup motion for the first motion that the government House leader fouled up; sullied, if you will.

Well, he did. Don't tell me "sully" is not parliamentary, Ms Churley. We've gone far enough down that path already.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I didn't say a word.

**Mr Kormos:** Ah, but you gave me a look.

**Ms Churley:** One of those Churley looks.

**Mr Kormos:** Yeah, and you know how I characterize those looks.

**Ms Churley:** I do.

**Mr Kormos:** Yes.

So there we go. We've got the House leader wide open, defenceless.

Now please, folks, look. There are only four of us, so if people who want to go home, feel free. I don't want government backbenchers sitting here tonight thinking that maybe there's going to be hijinks or shenanigans from this side. There are only four of us. You people feel free to go home to your loved ones. There are only four of us. What could four people do? Look: one, two, three, four. Feel free, those of you—House duty night after night. Not only did you not get in cabinet; they're making you do House duty at night. Let the cabinet ministers who make the big bucks do the House duty in the evening.

In any event, this is the second motion of this type. The government House leader started motion number 1—

**Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** Hey, I'm right here.

**Mr Kormos:** Howdy, ma'am. The government House leader, for some bizarre reason—

**Ms Martel:** Sandra's doing her House duty as well as that. Get that on the record. Put the rest of the cabinet to shame; Sandra's the only one here from the cabinet.

**Mr Kormos:** There's only one minister here: Ms Pupatello.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** Oh, it doesn't count when you're back there hiding behind the Speaker.

Ms Pupatello is putting her cabinet colleagues to shame. She has moxie, she's got spirit and she sticks with the program. Here she is, right in this Legislature, carrying House duty all by herself.

So then Mr Duncan, the government House leader, moves his motion. Again, didn't he know it was a debatable motion?

**Ms Martel:** Probably not.

**Ms Churley:** No, I don't think so.

**Mr Kormos:** Well, I don't know. I presume he has access to the same books I have access to.

It was Mr Hampton who leaned over and whispered, "Kormos, that's a debatable motion. I think you'd better muck up the works." Howard being the leader, and me being one of his acolytes—

**Ms Martel:** You're a sheep.

**Mr Kormos:** —that's right—I said, "Yes, leader. As asked, I will now proceed, as you've instructed, to muck up the works."

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** And lo and behold, it was a debatable motion.

**Mr Kormos:** But it wasn't a tough one. Sometimes you get confronted with tough ones, and sometimes they're easy ones. This one fell into our lap, so to speak.

So they start debating it. But then Mr Duncan, in his wisdom—because he's a careful, studied person, Mr Duncan is—moves adjournment of the debate. Right off the bat I said, "Whoops," because, at the very least, it would have required an amendment to that motion to clean it up, because of course it specified the date upon which we'd be debating the throne speech. But because he moved that the motion be adjourned, it was going to be adjourned to the date that the motion itself—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** No, no, Rosario, please; there are only four of us here, because we're not playing any shenanigans.

Out of nowhere, Mr Marchese appears; he strolled in.

**Ms Churley:** You're becoming like the Liberals. You're becoming like the Fiberals.

**Mr Kormos:** Fiberals.

In any event, he screwed up. So then he brings another motion. I, of course, brought a point of order—a rather feckless point of order, if you will, because, to be fair, even my own colleagues said, "Kormos, you ain't going to win this one." As a matter of fact, Howard Hampton, my leader, leaned over to me and said, "Kormos, you're not going to win this one; why are you even trying?" I said, "But Howard, who knows, what the heck, maybe we'll kill question period today." Because after all, when you're only eighth in question period and you have to stand up and ask for permission, question period really

doesn't mean that much to us. Heck, in the total scheme of things, if there's only one question and it's the eighth, I'm hard pressed to understand why New Democrats have any great sort of commitment to question period. Why? To listen to the fluff, the cotton candy stuff that comes out of government backbenchers? They're hardly questions. The problem is, they're not even members' statements, because the members don't write them. What it is are backbenchers being duped, usually by cabinet ministers who have been hard pressed to get a question.

Think about it. You're smiling. You've got the cabinet ministers who are begging for a question, pleading, "Please ask me, ask me." It was sort of like Grade 2 or 3, the old, "Oh, oh, over here, ask me." So what they do is they shanghai their backbenchers, convince them, "This is good for you. This is good exposure," and dissuade them from the fact that it's an incredible embarrassment to be asking sort of pat, especially when it's being documented on Hansard, especially when there are folks back home who are watching this who are saying, "My goodness. First of all, it sounds like a scripted question, and jeez, it seems as if the cabinet minister knew in advance what the question was going to be. What a waste of question period." People who have Liberal members say, "I thought our members told us about how they had such great access to cabinet and cabinet ministers. Why doesn't our member just go over and whisper into the cabinet minister's ear and get the answer then and there?"

1900

**Hon Ms Papatello:** On a point of order, Speaker: I was hoping that, since we're all riveted to the speaking going on this evening, we could ask the member for Niagara Centre to speak to the motion that's on the floor tonight.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. That's not a point of order. I think the member has to speak to the motion. He's aware of that.

**Mr Kormos:** I'm not challenging the Chair, but I think that's a pretty good point of order. I appreciate the minister's assistance and her support of me this evening. I want to tell the minister that when the occasion comes, I will have the same generosity of spirit toward her. I appreciate the minister's assistance in this regard, as she's quite right. She'll be speaking to this motion, which is a motion that has gotten pretty fouled up. The government actually time-allocated this motion. It gets worse, I say to the member who spoke before me, from—help—

**Mr Hampton:** Guelph-Wellington.

**Mr Kormos:** —From Guelph-Wellington. It gets worse, because you actually spent two days debating the time allocation motion that time-allocated this motion. You see? It doesn't get better; it gets worse.

Some people suggest that this is dilatory conduct. I suppose it is, but it's dilatory conduct on the part of the government House leader. Here's the government House leader, who sponsored legislation—these folks weren't even here two days before the government moved a motion to give everybody a three-month vacation—January, February, March. Unheard of. Down where I

come from I've got workers who work hard 52 weeks a year—hard pressed to get vacations. When they do have the smallest bit of vacation time, it isn't measured in months; it's hardly measured in weeks. More likely than not, it's measured in days.

Here at Queen's Park, where the minimum wage is \$85,000 and where the vast majority of members are well in excess of that—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Kormos:** They are.

**Ms Churley:** None of us.

**Mr Kormos:** Not New Democrats.

**Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** Are you jealous?

**Mr Kormos:** Well, the minimum wage is \$85,000. When you start talking about committee chairs, you're talking about another \$12,000 or so. Deputy Speakers: another eight or nine grand. Parliamentary assistants: I think you're up to 20 grand. You're in the \$100,000 club, parliamentary assistants. Ministers, as I recall, it's another 30 Gs.

Mind you, it's still not quite the 27% salary increase that the Liberals and Conservatives voted for themselves that, catch this, Ernie Eves cancelled, not Premier McGuinty, in a failed pre-emptive effort to try to prop up Tory support in the pre-election period. Understand that the minimum wage here is 85 grand and cabinet ministers are up to around 105, and within two days of being here, this government moves a motion giving itself a three-month vacation.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** The Minister of Community and Social Services, whose riding is down Windsor way—the member for Windsor West is talking about Remo Mancini. Ms Papatello, why are you doing this? Remo called me last week and said, "Peter, why are you mentioning me in the Legislature?" I said, "Remo, relax. Do you realize how many years it's been since anybody has mentioned your name in the Legislature? To boot, Remo, nobody knew who you were other than Jim Bradley and Norm Sterling." And Remo said, "Well, don't call me a double-dipper." I said, "Remo, technically you may not be. You picked up your \$40,000-plus-a-year pension."

So now the member for Windsor West is bringing up Remo Mancini, provoking me after I told Remo that I was going to try very hard not to talk about him. I thought he was your friend, not mine. I mean, I knew him, but I never considered him a friend. We certainly aren't members of the same political party. So he's a little self-conscious, Remo is, about his double-dipping. I told him I'd try to avoid mentioning him, and here his good friend the Minister of Community and Social Services starts tossing his name around as if he didn't deserve some privacy as he double-dips.

**Hon Ms Papatello:** What's your pension payout? I'll be speaking shortly. I'll be making up for those.

**Mr Kormos:** Good; the minister's going to speak.

By gosh, we've got five members, so any of you who left, you'd better come back, because who knows what these five will do.



So here we are, we've got a time allocation motion tonight and then we've still got to get around to the throne speech. And of course there are statutory requirements—a standing order, at least—as to how many days. We've got six days to go on the throne speech—is that right?

**Ms Churley:** They can't time-allocate that one.

**Mr Kormos:** Well, we never can tell. What do they call those motions? The pact from the McGuinty-Eves pact motions; the axis.

**Ms Churley:** Double-speak.

**Mr Kormos:** Well, it is an axis. The McGuinty-Eves pact is doing these programming motions. You talk about two guys who obviously have been poring over dog-eared volumes of Kafka to come up with one of those things, but there we are, and with the concept of almost consensus. Did you hear the argument, "Oh, but Speaker, there's almost a consensus. Surely that's got to count for something"? A near consensus has got to count for a whole lot more. So here we've got the pact. We've got Eves and McGuinty collaborating, designing time allocation motions, and then we've got people who say, "We're not allowed to debate."

Well, gosh, the member for Guelph-Wellington said she'd give us more time to debate. Use your time to debate. Don't hide your light under a bushel. You've got 20 minutes. Lord knows, you don't get a whole lot of time to debate. Most evening sittings, your members are silenced by your whip. Your members are told, "You can't debate." Your members are silenced.

The Conservative caucus is here in full force. There's Mr Sterling. Maybe he's going to be the interim leader.

**Ms Martel:** Does he get more pay for that?

**Mr Kormos:** I don't know. He's there all alone. Here are the Conservatives who vote for these evening sittings, but they're never at them. The party is tomorrow night, by the way, Mr Sterling, not tonight. So if your colleagues told you they were gone to the party, they've sold you a bill of goods.

So here we are, this incredible exercise, the first time in this Legislature's history that a motion like this has ever been moved. This isn't the original motion to debate the throne speech; this is the motion to clean up the motion to debate the throne speech. It's the first time in history that this motion has ever been moved. Of course, it's the first time it's ever been debated. It's the first time it's ever been time-allocated. This is an occasion of firsts for—

**Mr Hampton:** For a House leader.

**Mr Kormos:** Well, your House leader is exceptional because he's managed to achieve so many firsts in one fell swoop. There are records kept of this sort of thing and there will be an acknowledgement of it, I'm sure, somewhere, somehow, perhaps.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** Who knows where it will be recorded or documented? I'll certainly never forget it. It's one of those things that's burned into my memory. It's inerasable. It was unique; it was special. We sit over here looking for opportunities for this government to show

that its level of organization is less than what it would want the public out there to believe, and all of sudden, it's like manna. All of a sudden it's gifts. It's gift after gift after gift.

I'm eager to hear what my colleagues have to say about this motion. I know they are anxious to speak to it. They're chomping at the bit, so to speak, if that kind of terminology isn't inappropriate. We've got horse people down where I come from. We've got race tracks and horse farmers, so chomping at the bit is something we're inclined to do. It's a good thing.

Mr Marchese from Trinity-Spadina is anxious to debate this. He wants to, in a very serious manner, analyze this motion, and will undoubtedly be speaking more directly to the motion than I've managed to.

**1910**

I know Shelley Martel from Nickel Belt is equally anxious. We tried to send her home but she insisted that she be here. She said, "No way. My kids—heck, I can see them tomorrow morning. I want to be here tonight to debate this motion." The leader said, "No, if Shelley's going TO stay, I'm going to stay too."

Then Ms Churley-NDP said, "I want to debate this more than any of the rest of you want to debate this, because I have things to say that are unique, that nobody else could ever say about this motion." I said to Ms Churley-NDP, "Are you sure? Have you really figured this out and thought it out well?" She said, "I've never been more sure of anything in my life, Kormos." I said, "Well, Ms Churley-NDP, then feel free to lend your unique, novel perspective to this. The folks out in the Danforth there are going to be anxious to see you speak to that." Unfortunately, it won't be until around 10 o'clock tonight, give or take, or maybe 10:30 or 11. She's going to try to get it on before 12.

I thank you kindly for your incredible patience, Speaker. I really appreciate this opportunity.

**Mr Hampton:** Since government members aren't debating and I gather Conservative members aren't debating, I certainly want to take part in this debate, because this motion and how this motion was arrived at is, I think, instructive for all of us.

The reality is that this place needs rules to run, but there's another reality, and that is, no matter how you may tailor the rules, the rules can be used by everyone.

In my time in the Legislature—I think back to 1988-89 when New Democrats rang the bells for a while. Immediately afterwards, the Liberals introduced changes to the rules so that you couldn't ring the bells.

I remember when the Conservatives were over here as third party—I believe it was in 1991 or 1992—the leader of the then third party, Mike Harris, read into the record the names of all the lakes and rivers in Ontario. Of course, it was a delay tactic. It was a tactic of an opposition that only had, I think, 16 or 17 members at the time. It was their way of drawing public attention to something the government was doing which they thought was unpopular and wrong. I remember, after that, we, as the government then, New Democrats, amended the rules so you couldn't read in the names of lakes and rivers.

**Hon Ms Pupatello:** Those weren't the only rules you amended.

**Mr Hampton:** We amended those, yes.

Then I fast-forward to, I guess it was, 1996, when the Conservatives announced that they were going to force municipal amalgamation on cities like Toronto and Hamilton and Ottawa and Sudbury and the new city of Kawartha Lakes. There was a vote held in Toronto, where over 76% of the people in a referendum voted against amalgamation.

I remember the Conservatives brought forward their legislation and they weren't careful. We were able to get that legislation into committee of the whole and we were able to introduce 12,000 amendments. The only way they could deal with the amendments was either to sit down and make an agreement about what was going to happen and what wasn't going to happen, or sit here night and day while the 12,000 amendments were read.

After that, the Conservatives changed the rules and made it even more difficult for the opposition. I note that when the Attorney General gave his speech the other day, what did he mention? He mentioned changing the rules again—in other words, making it even more difficult for the opposition.

I come back to my original point: This place needs rules to run. But the reality is, no matter how you make the rules, the rules can be used by both sides. They can be used by the government and they can be used by the opposition. What works best around here is when we don't try to hard-line the rules, when we try to seek accommodation. We've been trying to seek some accommodation with your government for some time. For a parliamentary democracy to work well, you need to have effective opposition parties. That is especially true when you have a very large government majority. For a parliamentary democracy to work well, government gets to make their decisions in secret, in cabinet. They then take the results of those decisions in the form of proposed legislation that you bring here. But the opposition gets to question it, and the opposition parties need the resources so they can handle the press. You know, care and feeding of the press is a very important thing around here, being able to know what the press is interested in, what they want to hear about, what they think isn't important—being able to do some research.

We've been trying to reach an accommodation with your government for some time. We tried to open a discussion with your House leader and your Premier before the House ever sat. We were told, "No, the rules are the rules." So how did we get here? If the rules are the rules, the rules can be used by both sides. The rules say that the throne speech in fact is supposed to be read twice, is supposed to be read once by the representative of the Queen or King, but under ancient parliamentary tradition, the King or Queen is not allowed to tell us what to do. Therefore, the rules say that the Speaker, our elected Speaker, must read the throne speech. If we're not going to go rule by rule, you can dispense with the Speaker reading the throne speech. But it was your Premier and your House leader who said, "The rules are the rules.

We're going to go strictly by the rules." If you go strictly by the rules, the throne speech will be read twice. And if you go strictly by the rules, when your House leader makes not one mistake following the reading of the throne speech but two mistakes and literally puts your government in a position where he has brought forward a motion that leads nowhere—that's what he did, brought forward a motion that literally leads nowhere—of course we're going to quote back to you, "The rules are the rules."

We don't like operating this way. We recognize that this institution, this place, has an important job to do for the people of Ontario. But part of that important job is that you get to make the decisions, the opposition parties get to ask questions—and we have sufficient resources so that we can do a good job of asking questions. The Premier and your House leader don't want that to happen. So then you get stuck with, "The rules are the rules." The only way you've found to get yourself out of the mistakes that your House leader made was to bring in—you may call it a programming motion, but in fact it is the most restrictive closure motion I've seen in the 16½ years I've been in this Legislature. It is the most anti-democratic closure motion I've ever experienced. It's bizarre. I hear the Attorney General get up and give this long-winded speech about democratic renewal, but I see you bring a closure motion that is the most antidemocratic I've ever seen, that imposes closure on bills that haven't been debated long enough to qualify for the closure section or the time allocation section of our rules of the Legislature.

If you think you can operate the House by means of those kinds of closure motions—you may call it a programming motion to avoid the embarrassment that it's really a closure motion—if you think you can run the House that way, sometimes you'll be able to. But let me tell you, if the way you want to run the Legislature is to hard-line it all the time and say, "The rules are the rules and we're going to strictly use the rules to smash you, or strictly use the rules to limit what you can do," then recognize that the rules can also be used by the opposition party. The rules will lead you, as they have tonight, into a bizarre result.

**1920**

Your House leader, on the day of the throne speech, didn't mess up once; he messed up twice, and now the only way he can think of to get himself out of the never-never land that he put himself in is to bring this very antidemocratic closure motion and then have to engage in the discussion we're having tonight.

You know what I'd rather be discussing? I'd rather be discussing how many questions and how they should be allocated to the two opposition parties so that we can ask the effective questions that need to be asked. Question period ought to be about good, hard-edged opposition questions and good answers by cabinet ministers, not fluff-ball stuff. The media is embarrassed by our question periods now. They're writing about how they're embarrassed by our question periods. They're embarrassed



by the fact that we're not getting those kinds of good questions that demand accountability, that demand responsibility of the government.

I'd rather be talking about what kind of budget is necessary to make sure that we can ask effective questions that raise the issues the people out there want to see raised, effective questions that will allow us to make proposals about how legislation can be improved—or perhaps that some kinds of legislation should be removed. That's what should be going on here. But you need to recognize it is your government that got you here tonight and it's your government that refuses to hold those kinds of meaningful discussions so that we can actually get on to doing the business, the work of the people, more effectively, more efficiently and more meaningfully.

Will we have other nights like tonight? I suspect we will if your House leader continues to have the attitude, "The rules are the rules. We're going to interpret them strictly. We're going to interpret them harshly." When he does that, he leaves us no choice.

One of the realities of being in opposition is that the government always has a majority. At the end of the day, the government will get their way. But as an opposition party, you use the rules sometimes to delay, sometimes to be able to do as we're doing here tonight, raise the real issue that's at the heart of this debate—and the real issue at the heart of this debate is that I recognize we don't have official party status, but that does not mean your voice doesn't count. It shouldn't mean that the government can then say, "Oh, you have no rights in the Legislature." It shouldn't mean that.

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** We haven't said that.

**Mr Hampton:** Read the letters that your House leader has been sending over. Read them and look at them.

It seems to me that if the government wanted to find a resolution to this, all the government House leader had to do was say, "Look, we need to talk. We need to have a discussion." Has the government House leader done that? No. Has the government House leader shown the willingness to have this discussion around any of these issues? No. It's the government House leader who continues to insist that the rules are the rules and they're going to be applied strictly and they're going to be applied stringently and they're going to be applied however the government wants to force its way, even if it's quite antidemocratic, even if it involves a closure motion, which is the most restrictive and the most antidemocratic I've ever seen in my time in the Legislature.

I wish we weren't here debating this motion. I do. I wish we were not here debating this motion. I wish we were, for example, debating the need for more construction site inspectors so that—

**Mr McMeekin:** Let's do that.

**Mr Hampton:** Why don't we? Because you've got a government House leader who doesn't even want those issues to get on the agenda; that's why.

I'd rather be here tonight discussing what is the government's hydroelectric policy, because I can't figure it out, and no one can. I suggest none of you can. Because when I look at it over a two- or a two-and-a-half-year period, it's been on just about every point on the spectrum. One day Dalton McGuinty's all in favour of privatization of generation and transmission and he's in favour of deregulation, and then a week later he's not sure about that, then you get a letter going out to the Bay Street investment community saying, "Oh yes, Liberals are in favour of that." I'd rather be here determining exactly what is your hydro policy, because literally hundreds of thousands of jobs in this province depend on it, and whether people will freeze in the dark or not depends on it and, to a large extent, the environmental future of the province depends on it. If we had a government House leader who didn't take the position that the rules are the rules, we could get into some of those fruitful debates.

I'd actually like to be talking about, for example, what it is going to take for us to properly and adequately look after our seniors, many of whom are in long-term-care facilities where they are not being properly and adequately cared for. We've got a government House leader who says, "No. The rules are the rules, and we're going to interpret the rules stringently and strictly, and if that means that you don't get to ask questions about those things and raise those important issues, so be it."

What's at the heart of this debate? The reason we're here debating this motion today is because we've got—and I've seen this before. I remember when you people were elected in 1995. I remember some of your members coming to the House—in fact, I remember Mr Flaherty in private members' hour. He brought a private member's bill that would have had the effect of docking the pay of any member who was ever thrown out of the House. From time to time, the Speaker has to eject a member of the House. It was really quite draconian. I remember that 12 of us stood, and when it came time to vote on the private member's bill—and the effect of 12 of us standing is that it doesn't get voted on. If 12 members stand in opposition to a private member's bill, you can prevent it from being voted on. I remember how angry he was that day. He came over to me and he was fuming, and I said, "Jim, read the rules. Read the rules. We're simply using the rules that are put there."

**Ms Churley:** For a good reason.

**Mr Hampton:** For a good reason. So I say to the government members, you can try to hardball it. You may beat us down. You can try to hardball it and you can try to run over us, and you may succeed in that for a while, but let me tell you, there will come a night when you want something passed and you need it passed, or you need something done, or you think it's really important for your agenda, and all of a sudden it doesn't happen. Somebody will stand up and say, "The rules are the rules."

**Mr McMeekin:** Is that ever silly.

**Mr Hampton:** We don't want to engage in those tactics. I would much rather operate in terms of unanimous consents, in terms of finding consensus and agree-

ment, but as long as your position continues to be, “The rules are the rules, and we’re going to apply them in a very hard-edged way, in a very stringent and restrictive way,” you can end up in these situations. They are the situations of your own making. Nobody twisted your government House leader’s arm on the day of the reading of the throne speech. No one said to him that he had to bring the motion that he did. He was worried that we might do something and, as a result, he brought a motion that was, frankly, very unwise, and then, realizing he’d brought a motion that was very unwise, he tried to rescue it by means of another motion, which got him even deeper into the dark hole.

1930

I’d just say to you, that’s not a good way to run a Legislature. It’s not. You have a huge majority. To try to use that large majority to always force your way—the seating plan is another example. It’s really quite insulting. I heard the Speaker’s decision, but you realize that the three Legislatures he referred to to try to justify the position you’re taking—in British Columbia, Quebec and now in Ontario—the Legislatures that he referred to to try to justify the seating plan are other Legislatures where there’s a large Liberal majority that is trying to silence the opposition parties. In Quebec, even though the ADQ got 18% of the vote, Jean Charest is now trying to make the ADQ disappear, employing many of the same tactics that you’re employing, and employing the same tactics with respect to the seating plan. In British Columbia, where the Liberals have a huge, overwhelming majority, once again it’s that Liberal majority that is trying to implement the same tactic.

I say to you, it’s very unbecoming. It’s going to hurt you, the more the public perceives that a large Liberal majority is simply trying to force its way. And when you try to force your way, these are the conundrums you get into. This is the conundrum your House leader got you into on throne speech day.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate on the motion?

*Applause.*

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Please, please. I might criticize you.

I’m happy to take this opportunity to speak because, I’ve got to tell you, we don’t have that many opportunities. So I grasp each and every opportunity possible to speak to any motion before us. I am doing what Jim Bradley loved to do here for eight years. I’m not sure, but Jim Bradley, the now Minister of Tourism—you remember?—never missed an opportunity to speak. Never. You remember, he would be here or not here, but if he weren’t here, he would be watching television and run in to get his five minutes.

**Mr Kormos:** He’d drive back from St Catharines.

**Mr Marchese:** If he was in St Catharines, he’d drive right back; quite right. Jim loved this place. He lived here.

**Mr McMeekin:** Still does.

**Mr Marchese:** Still does. And, member from Ancaster-Dundas, Jim used to love to come and debate, particularly closure motions. Do you remember that? I

remember that. He loved closure motions, because he wanted to stand up and excoriate the government for introducing time closure motions, because he felt—and I agreed—that closure motions strangled debate, suffocated debate, prevented the ongoing debate of issues, no matter what. He was opposed to them, each and every time, and boy, was he upset when somebody else wouldn’t let him speak. You could tell.

**Interjection:** Even his own House leader.

**Mr Marchese:** His House leader, others, I just don’t know, but you could tell when he was visibly upset, that he ran to speak and somebody bumped him off because they wanted to knock him out of the speaking order. Jim, he was loyal, faithful, tough, and tough against the government.

**Ms Churley:** The member for St Catharines.

**Mr Marchese:** St Catharines. What did I say?

**Ms Churley:** His name.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course. I usually say, “the now Minister of Tourism.” We were buddies once. Boy, we were so close for eight years, we knew each other’s speeches. I had them memorized. And I’m sure he memorized ours. It surprises me how quickly he forgot where he came from. You forget your roots, you forget your culture, you forget where you came from.

**Ms Martel:** You forget the past.

**Mr Marchese:** And you want to forget the past. I know that the member from Ancaster-Dundas wants to forget the past. I know he does, because I see him chippy every now and then and engaging and—boy, is he engaged. I never used to remember him so engaged as I see him now. I like that; don’t get me wrong. I think it’s good. It’s good to see members actively engaged, one way or the other. I think it’s good for democracy and debate in this place. For me, debating time allocation motions, which this one is, is important to do. It’s time-allocated. We’ll get to the other programming motion in a moment. In terms of closure motions, time-allocated motions, they’re all in the same league. I remember Jim very well, I remember the members for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough, Hamilton East, St Catharines, Windsor West, and Toronto Centre-Rosedale—all of them—speaking against the rule changes that were making it very difficult for us to participate.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, no, member for Ancaster, I remember you well. I remember all of the Liberals well. Each and every time there was a rule change, Liberals were on their feet decrying and attacking it, as well they should and as well they did. We were supportive of each other in that endeavour.

**Mr McMeekin:** Work with us.

**Mr Marchese:** We’re trying to work with you. The problem is that you don’t want to work with us. The member from Ancaster says, “Let’s debate those issues,” and, “Work with us.” We’re trying. The problem is that you want to shut out the NDP completely. That’s not working with us. You understand the game, right? When you say, “Work with us,” what you’re saying is, “Let us, as a political party, as a governing party, do what we



want to do. And whether New Democrats participate or not is irrelevant." Do you understand?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not understanding what you're saying. I've got to tell you, in the same way I want to take the time to be able to communicate my ideas, we encourage each and every one of you to do the same. And don't just take two minutes to express yourselves; take the whole 20, because you have so much to say. One Liberal spoke: the member for Guelph-Wellington. I think she spoke for about five or six minutes. Something like that, in that area more or less. I suppose she's probably saying, "I communicated what I needed to and that was enough." That's fair enough. Some people are succinct—

**Mrs Sandals:** Sometimes I'm very brief. At other times, I'm very long.

**Mr Marchese:** You're quite right: You were very concise.

Member from Ancaster, you could do the same. Stand up and take five minutes. Talk to us and tell us why—

**Mr McMeekin:** I've debated this one already.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, no, you didn't. Then debate it again because I didn't hear it, obviously. If you did, I didn't hear it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** You understand, member for Guelph-Wellington, we need the member to stand up and tell us why he wants to work with us, why he wants to debate certain bills, why we might not be part of it and what you're willing to do to change that. Member from Ancaster, when you introduced the co-called programming motion—by the way, it's a euphemism for closure; you understand that, right? Because the people out there, what are they to know? "Programming motion"? It sounds like a nice idea. It's like you're putting forth a program and you're going to debate and talk about it. It seems neat. It's a closure motion. Folks who are watching this political channel—it's now 20 to 8—the programming motion is a euphemism for closure—and worse, as our leader indicated.

This motion allows less time for debate on government bills and motions that have been introduced than the Tories have done previously. In the past, under the Tories, we were at least allowed to debate for three days. Then they would introduce a closure motion and we'd have another debate on that. At least we had that. The so-called programming motion gives us less time for debate. This from a Liberal government that so short a while ago was there on the opposition benches decrying those types of closure motions. So the problem we had was that you went with the Tories, made a deal and said, "The two parties that have status here have made a deal. The third party doesn't count." Does that sound fair to you, member from Ancaster, Flamborough and all the other parts that you represent?

**Mr McMeekin:** It sounds to me like you're wasting everyone's time.

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**Mr Marchese:** But does it sound fair to you? And you're a fair man, because you used to work for a New Democrat once. I suspect there is some modicum of fairness. I know it's in your bones somewhere. I know that you don't think it's a fair thing that you would secretly go with the Conservatives, strike a deal, shut us out and then say, "We got the other party that's got status."

Just admit, stand up in the five minutes and say, "We don't want to give the New Democrats status." Just stand up and admit why it is that you wouldn't want the New Democrats to have any form of status: because in your mind it's wonderful to have New Democrats not being able to participate in the way they did. Imagine the glory in this place. Your magical moment is to have Tories ask you questions and limit the number of times New Democrats would ask you questions. You know that. That's what you love to do.

You see, citizens of Ontario watching this political forum, they don't want New Democrats to ask questions. They don't want our leader to have two lead questions. They certainly don't want any other members of the New Democratic Party to ask any more questions than they have to. So what we are getting at the moment is one question once a day where the leader has to subject himself, submit himself to the Chair and to the other caucuses, to ask for permission to speak. Then the House leaders and the others say, "It's OK, Howard, you can ask the question." By the grace of the members every day, our leader, begging to ask a question, gets to ask a question.

Member from Ancaster, I know you don't think it's fair or right and/or reasonable. If you do, you never had any New Democratic connection to the person you had worked with in the past. I suspect you have some—always hidden away, tightly kept in your chest. The fact of the matter is, we play by the rules so as to allow 15% of the electorate—close to one million people who elected us—the opportunity to hear New Democrats debate issues of importance to us, and of importance to them; 15% of the electorate is a lot of people. This is not a private game. This is not an interest that is personally mine. I don't stand here in this place speaking in order to amuse myself, or to amuse other New Democrats who are quickly running away anyway. I am here debating on behalf of close to a million people who supported us, because they want to listen to and hear New Democrats.

The member from Ancaster says, "Why don't you have status?" How easily he forgets that when he was there in that campaign, urging New Democrats to vote for him and others so they could get rid of the Tories, he didn't mind getting New Democratic votes on the so-called strategic voting style. "Get rid of the Tories. Vote for Liberals. Don't waste your vote on the NDP." You didn't mind New Democratic votes then, did you? You loved them then, didn't you?

**Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland):** They did the right thing.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, sure, they did the right thing. But no New Democrat or left-leaning Liberal who voted for you folk ever dreamed that New Democrats wouldn't have the opportunity to stand in this place and ask the required questions that would give us and them the democracy they deserve—no one. I am convinced there's not one single New Democrat who, had they known that by voting for you we could lose a seat and not have status, would have voted for you. You don't mind sucking away their votes before an election, but after the election you ask, "Why didn't you get status? We won and you didn't. Them is the rules." That's the way you would put it.

I remind you: Rules change, governments change, we change, Liberals change—

**Mr McMeekin:** I give up.

**Mr Marchese:** You give up? You should—because when the Liberals were in power they changed the rules, when New Democrats were in power we changed the rules, when Tories were in power they changed the rules. Now we are starting the cycle again. I am telling you, each and every time we've changed the rules, we've made it tougher and tougher for us to deal with each other fairly. Each time you change the rules you make it tougher for the opposition parties, in this case New Democrats, to co-operate in the way you would love us to co-operate. Each time you tighten the rules you force us to find ways for New Democrats to be heard. I know you don't like it. I know your intention is simply to do what you want to do, but your programming motion is something we haven't seen in this place yet.

For you Liberals to have attacked for eight years closure motions introduced by the Tories countless times, innumerable times, for you to do what you decried for eight years is, in my view, a pitiful, shameful act. I understand it, but I disagree so profoundly with what you've done. I believe it's a serious mistake.

The fact of the matter is, you want us to play by the rules set by you. We don't believe unilateral games or rules set by one player are fair. They're not fair. When you do not allow the other party to engage you in the way they should, it's not right. When you resist the desire and/or interest for our leader to stand up in this place and ask questions, we think you are wrong.

Frankly, I believe the people of Ontario, those who are watching—because I tell you, the member for Nepean-Carleton once said here, "Look, not one constituent in my area ever talked about the rule changes or closure motions," and he's probably right. That doesn't make it right. The fact that many people out there may not be following the rules of this Legislature or understand what we're doing doesn't make it right. There are a lot of people who follow the electoral process; there are many who follow what we do. I am convinced that many of your own supporters don't like what you've done and don't like what you're doing.

So if you want to be able to have New Democrats participating in this place in the way that you would like us, if you want us to be able to co-operate with you, it's something that has to be mutually worked at. We both

have to work at giving and taking. I don't see that. We don't see that.

**Mr McMeekin:** You need to work at it.

**Mr Marchese:** We need to—

**Mr McMeekin:** You need to work at it. This isn't working at it.

**Mr Marchese:** No, I'm saying that one party alone cannot resolve a matter. Mediation happens between two people, usually, and a mediator usually has to be there. But in this case, we cannot solve this alone. I'm sorry. We can't surrender our role here as parliamentarians and wait for you to decide, by your grace or magnanimity, what it is that you will offer us or not. We can't do that.

We've had very few gestures from your House leader in this regard that would speak to what it is your government, your caucus, is willing to work with New Democrats on that would allow us in a way to get the fairness we deserve and the voice we need in order to be able to represent 15% of the electorate out there that at the moment are shut out. At the moment they are shut out. You're not just shutting me out when you do that. You're not just shutting out our seven New Democrats when you do that. You are shutting out 15% of the electorate that is desperately looking for a voice, and that voice isn't coming from the Conservatives, and that voice is not coming from Liberals. It will never come from Liberals and, generally speaking, it will never come from Tories. From time to time, it can come from Liberals. From time to time, it does. It's rare and far between.

I've got to tell you, we've got to see how this agenda will unfold in the next four years. Many promises were made by the Liberals; I'm not sure how many they will keep. Some of them have argued, "It takes a tough leader to be able to break promises." I'm telling you, it doesn't take a tough leader to break promises; anybody can do that. What's tougher is saying what you believe in before an election and then keeping those promises. If you believe you can't keep those promises, then you should not make them. This government has made promises they knew they could not keep. The rate cap was a promise they knew they couldn't keep. The hydro rate cap was costing us \$700 million or \$800 million a year. It was a promise that was expensive. It was money that was not on the books, but it was too expensive for us not to deal with. The Liberals said, "We'll keep it until 2006"; it was wrong. It doesn't take much of a tough leader to say that before an election, but it does take a tough leader to keep that promise.

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Now the Liberals are arguing, "We've got a tough leader, someone who's responsible, someone who's going to be able to break promises, because it takes a tough man to do that." No, it doesn't. I'm telling you, it doesn't. You're going to have to deal with that. You're going to have to deal with the electorate. That's something we will hold you accountable to, because that's our job. It is the job of the opposition parties to keep governments accountable. They cannot keep themselves accountable; they cannot do that. It is the job of citizens



of Ontario, in conjunction and in collaboration with opposition parties, that we hold governments accountable, no matter who they are. In this case and at this time, it's the Liberals.

We will use the rules when we have to, to make sure our voices are heard. There's simply no other way we can do that. This government is not allowing us that and, until they come and make a proposal that's fair, that we can live with, that fairly represents those who voted for us and including many who didn't—until that happens, we will simply not be able to get along in the way that we would like to.

Some of these issues could have been easily dealt with, but they have prevented us from doing it. I hope it will change.

**Ms Martel:** I'm going to begin tonight by noting that my three colleagues who have spoken before, and two more who will speak, have, I think, articulated very clearly how we have found ourselves in this situation tonight, but I think it's probably worthwhile for me just to repeat it one more time.

The motion we have before us, the government motion, is a motion that the government House leader had to bring forward to fix two mistakes he made with respect to the throne speech. So for those Liberal members who argue we should be talking about other things tonight and we shouldn't be dealing with this, I've got to remind you that we are because of two procedural mistakes made by your own House leader. So we're here as a consequence of his actions.

Secondly, we're here dealing with a motion that is part of a broader government closure motion, and a fair bit has been said about that. But it is worth repeating that it truly is the most regressive and restrictive closure motion that I have seen in my 16-and-some years in this place. It is the most regressive and the most restrictive because, unlike other time allocation motions that have been brought in this place, it was not restricted to timing or ending the debate with respect to only one government bill. The fact of the matter is, the time allocation motion brought by the government House leader restricts debate and committee and third reading debate and sets the timing for votes on three government bills, one of which had not even reached the maximum time for debate that would be normal before a time allocation motion is brought; three government bills, one opposition date motion, which will be dealt with tomorrow, and two other government notices of motion.

So it was a broad sweep of many of the things the government wanted to get done, but that broad sweep has made it absolutely the most regressive and restrictive time allocation motion that I have seen in my years here. The Liberals under Peterson brought forward nothing like it. When we were in government, there was nothing like that brought forward. Even when your party, Speaker, was in government—and I disagreed strongly with omnibus bills and time allocation motions like Bill 26—even you and your government never brought forward anything like this.

Within less than two weeks of this House sitting, we see a government bring forward a tremendously restrictive motion—the same party now in government that, when they were on this side, in opposition, would rail against the government time allocation motions or government closure motions. And those were time allocation motions on only single bills—not three bills, including one opposition day and two more government notices of motion.

We're here tonight because of two mistakes your own government House leader made and because we are dealing with the fallout from a very restrictive, regressive time allocation motion that was brought forward by the government House leader—with the full consent, I might add, of the Conservative Party.

I guess that will be the new order of business in this Legislature. I would remind members that what goes around comes around, and there will be a day when you will very much regret that you moved this motion and that your Speaker accepted it, because you will find yourself on the receiving end of the government deciding to shut down debate, shut down public hearings, shut down the moving of amendments—shutting down voting. You will regret that when what goes around comes around to you.

The motion before us has to do with the throne speech, which was read twice—which, by the rules, should be read twice. If the government wants to live by the rules, then we will live by the rules. The government might not like that from time to time, because those rules work two ways, as the government is finding out.

This motion deals with calling the throne speech for debate, and six days of debate are going to have to occur when we actually finally start that debate, unless of course somebody in the chair decides that we can throw out the Legislative Assembly Act and the law and curtail that debate too.

When we do start the debate on the throne speech, I will be very interested to hear the rationale from government members about why they are now beating such a hasty retreat away from their election promises. What was interesting about hearing the throne speech twice is that it reinforced for me just how quickly, how rapidly, how profoundly the government is now trying to get away from the 231 election promises it made, because it was very clear, as you looked at the details, limited as they were, in the throne speech, that the government had neither a timetable nor a specific commitment to some of those many, many promises they made during the election campaign.

What I saw was a government that is going to try and use the \$5.6-billion deficit that they pretend they knew nothing about as the excuse for not being able to meet those promises. Many of those promises will not be kept, because as the government looks to cut \$4 billion from its expenditures, many of those cuts will come at the expense of education and health care and community services. Many of the promises regarding nurses and the recruitment of new physicians and the establishment of new community health centres and the implementation of

the Kimberley Rogers inquest etc will be lost as well, because with a \$4-billion cut in public expenditures there won't be the money available to deal with the promises that were made.

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I'll be interested to hear from the government why it is that the throne speech said nothing about the promise that was specifically made by the Liberal Party to hire 8,000 nurses. I suspect many nurses in the province of Ontario voted for the Liberal Party because they believed that new hiring would occur and they believed the Liberals when they promised there would be a move to ensure that 70% of all nurses working in the province would be working full-time in hospital or community-based care. Wasn't it strange that there was no reference whatsoever to the hiring of those 8,000 nurses—when, the timetable, what the allocation would be, if it would be in the hospital sector or the home care sector or the long-term-care sector or all three. The government had nothing to say. I'll be interested to hear from the government why they had nothing to say about that very specific promise.

I'll be interested to hear from the government why nothing has been done to end the discrimination against autistic children aged six who need IBI treatment. Again, this was a very specific promise made by this government to families in Ontario who have autistic children. It was made very specifically in a letter from Mr McGuinty to a parent of an autistic child who will turn age six in the next year and who will be cut off IBI treatment if nothing is done to end that discrimination. I think that promise was made because in the last 18 months I have raised that very same issue in this House. I have had families in this gallery who have been directly affected. We have seen the desperate personal financial situation of so many families who are trying to pay for IBI treatment themselves. I think that as a consequence of that very public matter, and because most progressive members believe that discrimination is wrong, the Liberals made a very specific promise.

That letter was sent far and wide to the autism e-mail list, I can tell you, because I'm part of that list. I noted with a great deal of surprise that not one word was said about autistic children in the throne speech, not one word about making good on the government promise to end the discrimination against autistic children aged six who need IBI. Not only was there nothing said about that; there was nothing said about dealing with those hundreds of other autistic children who are not aged six yet who are desperately in need of this treatment, who are languishing on waiting lists, who will turn age six before they ever get a single second of treatment. I hope the minister responsible for children's issues will be in her place telling us why nothing was said in the throne speech about the government's promise on autistic children.

I look forward to hearing why there was nothing in the throne speech about the promise made by this government, not only during the election but before the election, on a number of occasions, that the government would cancel the private MRI and CAT scan clinics that were

put in place, the request for proposals that went out under your government, Speaker. We recognize that money that should go into patient care goes into the profit line in private, for-profit MRI and CAT scan clinics. We also recognize, and it was highlighted by the Minister of Community and Social Services, before she was the minister, that establishment of these very same clinics is leading to a poaching of radiologists in the public hospital system. She raised that in the media before the election. She was right. She would still be right if she were raising it now. But the Liberals didn't raise it in the throne speech. There was a lot of talk about the slow creeping of privatization in the throne speech, but on something as concrete as for-profit, private MRI and CAT scan clinics and shutting them down to stop the creeping privatization of health care, the government was silent. The government is still silent on that issue of when we're going to ensure that they're shut down and that MRIs and CAT scans go in to publicly funded, publicly administered hospitals in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to be waiting to hear why it is that the government said nothing in the throne speech about care for seniors and the disabled in long-term-care facilities, or said nothing, for example, about reversing the fee increase for seniors living in long-term-care facilities that was imposed by the former Conservative government. You see, both of those promises were made in the Liberal health platform for the election. In fact the Liberal health platform for the election says very specifically: "Cancel the Harris-Eves 15% increase in nursing home fees." It says very specifically: "Set high standards for our nursing homes and regularly inspect them to make sure those standards are being met."

You know, if the government was serious about doing those two things—because, after all, thousands and thousands and thousands of seniors and the disabled live in long-term-care facilities, and thousands and thousands of them are affected by a lack of standards and have been affected by the fee increase—I would have thought there would have been some mention in the throne speech of what the government was going to do with respect to those very same seniors. I would have expected that the government in the throne speech, if it meant what it said, would have come forward in that same document and said, "That is an end. There is now an end to that three-year fee increase imposed by the previous government," a 15% fee hike that was well above what would have been allowed in the private rental market in Ontario if that legislation applied to long-term care facilities. They would have sent a clear signal to seniors that we recognize that you are on low income and that it is expensive to stay in long-term-care facilities, and we will ensure that there is an end, that those fee hikes are eliminated and that can be money that goes back into your pockets. The government was silent.

The more difficult one for me, I guess, in the context of the series with respect to seniors and long-term-care facilities that has been underway in the paper lately, was to appreciate that the government said absolutely nothing about what progressive steps it's going to take to ensure



that there is high quality care for seniors and the disabled living in long-term-care facilities. But the government didn't come forward and say that there will be standards in very short order to ensure the quality of care of seniors who are living in our long-term-care facilities.

The government had nothing to say in the throne speech that we heard most recently, but the minister had a lot to say just a couple of days ago when he was interviewed by the *Toronto Star*. The minister got up and said, "We're going to have a revolution in long-term care. We're going to make sure that we fix the problem that's going on." The newspaper reports that he cried when he was told about the very dramatic and very terrible situation that faced a number of seniors and was reported on. You know what? We don't really need the minister's tears; we need some action.

He doesn't even have to wait to bring in amendments to the Long-Term Care Act because much of what was promised in the Liberal election platform can be done by regulation. He could go to cabinet tomorrow—because cabinet normally meets on Wednesday—and he could move regulations like that to improve standards of care in long-term-care facilities. He could go to cabinet tomorrow and he could determine that there will be minimum standards of care per resident per day in long-term-care facilities. There used to be, under our government, a regulation that said 2.25 hours of hands-on nursing care per resident per day. The Conservatives got away from that. They tore up that regulation. If the minister wanted to do something, some concrete action, he could bring forward that regulation tomorrow. He could bring forward a regulation tomorrow that said, "There will be three baths a week for people who live in long-term-care facilities," because we know there used to be a regulation in place and the Conservative government got rid of that. So there isn't even a standard in place with respect to how many baths a week the disabled and seniors in long-term-care facilities are supposed to have. He doesn't need legislation for that; he could pass it as a regulation tomorrow.

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He could pass a regulation tomorrow at cabinet that would say there has to be a registered nurse in all long-term-care facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week, a regulation that used to be in place and was cancelled by the Conservative government. He could go to cabinet tomorrow and put forward a regulation that would say that all of the complaints and all of the infractions and all of the orders against individual nursing homes and long-term-care facilities will be posted in a public place so people can know what the track record is of the long-term-care facility that they want to put their mom or dad in. He could do that tomorrow without any legislation.

But you know what? It's telling, because there was no mention of that in the throne speech, despite the promise that was made. So you've really got to wonder about the commitment of this government to seniors and the frail and elderly in long-term-care facilities when there was absolutely no mention of what the government intended to do in this regard.

It will be interesting to hear the Liberals try to defend in the throne speech why so many of the promises they made didn't make the cut in the throne speech at all, weren't referenced, weren't talked about, weren't highlighted, weren't reinforced, weren't mentioned at all. I look forward to that debate when it comes, but I remind the members that the reason we're here tonight is because of two mistakes your own government House leader made on the day of the throne speech. That's why we're here tonight; that's why we're debating the motion that we are tonight.

**Ms Churley:** I'm happy to have a chance to participate in this debate tonight, but I was waiting for some of the esteemed members—well, the one from the Tory caucus, Mr Sterling, is still here. Isn't he a trooper? And many, many Liberals are here, I'm pleased to see.

I have been listening, too. There was only one member from the governing party who spoke tonight, and that is the member for Guelph-Wellington, who spoke for just a few minutes. She lamented that we were actually here tonight, that we were here, in her view, wasting our time, that we could all be doing better things. I must say that as she was speaking and as—

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** What have you been doing at your desk?

**Ms Churley:** I'm about to tell you—signing Christmas cards, if you really want to know; signing Christmas cards as I've been listening to the speeches around me here tonight, waiting for my chance to talk about why I'm glad to have this opportunity tonight and to talk quite seriously about how in a way what's happening here tonight is a sad demonstration of a political system that isn't working for anybody any more. And in that, I include a government: this government, the government before, our government, in a sense. There are many people who know, including our party—and in fact the Liberals talked about it in their platform, changing the system to some form of proportional representation, because this archaic system is outdated and not only doesn't serve the opposition any more as more and more rules are changed to benefit the government, whatever government of the day, if they are not getting their way right away; it is the electorate, the people who elected us to serve their interests, who are most suffering as a result of what goes on in this place under this archaic system of first past the post.

We have a situation in this case of a government that was elected with a large majority. Many people voted for Liberals—that's right—in part to get the Tories out. We all recognize that. I have some New Democratic friends who voted for Liberals, and I'm sure you do too, Mr Speaker, lots of them in certain ridings, because they didn't think in that particular area that we New Democrats had a chance, and they voted for Liberals. As a result of that, we're here tonight, to some extent, debating this motion to debate the throne speech because right after the election, when New Democrats, although we increased our vote—in the popular vote, we had more votes than we did the last time, when we actually had

party status. But we didn't get party status because we're below that arbitrary number that was picked back in 1999, when Mike Harris reduced the number in this place, from 130 to 108, and did not at the same time accordingly reduce the number needed for party status, and as well for quorum and committees. All of those things were left, so that after the election those decisions then became a political football.

You were involved, I believe, Mr Speaker. I was involved—with Dave Christopherson, who was then the House leader of my party, and I was the whip—I was quite engaged in the negotiations—at least then we had negotiations—between all three parties. We objected then to the number eight being chosen for a number of 103, because we looked at the number in Ottawa: 12 for over 300 members. Across the country, we saw that if you took the average, four would be the number for this number of parliamentarians. But we suggested five, and we suggested that on the basis of what? Because we had more members than that; I believe at the time we had nine.

We were thinking ahead to this happening to not only our party. The electorate's pretty volatile these days. I mean, it could be the Liberals next time. It really could. It's hard to believe, I know, when you're in government and you're just full of vim and vinegar, and you have all these plans and you think you're so special and above everybody else in this place, particularly the opposition, and you can't believe that you're going to end up over here—but it happens.

I believe, as I argued then and I argue now, that it's for the sake of democracy. You could argue that without our caucus funding we can't be as effective in question period. We can't represent our constituents or I can't represent my critic area as well as I could when we had the staff to do the media work, to do the research, to help me with all of that. I could travel the province and talk to communities. I can't be as effective; I admit that. I will try, I will do my best, and fortunately for me, I have a pretty long memory now. I'm banking on that in this House; there's a lot of things I know from being around here for a long time and being a community activist before that.

On the other hand, I could say, in another sense, "I'm fine, pal." I'm getting paid still. I'm not getting the extra money. In fact, the other parties get the extra money: you, Mr Speaker, for sitting in that chair. Deputies and deputy whips, House leaders and committee Chairs, all get extra money. We're not getting any of that. I don't care; that's not an issue with me. The fact is, though, I'm still getting my paycheque once a month, so I'm OK as an individual. I got elected; I haven't lost that. I still have my constituency office.

So when people from particularly the government side like to yell out and argue when we try to make it understood why we are arguing ferociously for a fair settlement in terms of our ability in this House to represent our constituents and our principles, they say it's all about the money. Well, it isn't all about the money. I'm not going to get an extra cent out of it, nor do I want an extra cent

out of it. I want the ability to do what I was elected to do, and that is to respond to the government effectively on the issues in the throne speech, which we will be debating soon.

I say in all seriousness to the government members, and particularly the new members who have not sat in the opposition benches—and those who have been here before understand perfectly well what we are talking about here because they've sat over on this side as well and used the tactics to great success. I think about Alvin Curling, now Speaker of the House, who refused to vote. He broke a rule. We're going with the rules to make our point. Mr Curling broke a rule and we supported him because we all, including the Liberals—and he is a Liberal member—believed the Tories were being undemocratic and we needed to do something. We couldn't even do something within the rules that was effective enough to stop the then government, so we actually broke the rules to make our point. That's how strongly we felt, when they were in power, about stopping a government that was running amok and not listening to the democratic wishes of our constituents. But the new members I understand, because when I was first elected in 1990, I had been on city council before that here in Toronto. Anybody who's been on municipal boards or boards of education understands it's a whole different atmosphere the way we debate and come to decisions. It's quite a shock when you come here as a government member and see what seems to you as foolishness a lot of the time because of the archaic rules and the way we use or don't use them. I understand that.

## 2020

There's also this sense of, "We're the government now. Why are they stopping us? We have a majority. Why can't we just do what we said we were going to do? Why are they stopping us? It's frustrating." I think it takes sitting in the opposition seats to fully understand the implication of being opposite a government in a first-past-the-post system that has all the power, ultimately, to do whatever it wants to do. But we quite genuinely frequently don't agree and we know our constituents don't agree. We need to have the ability within the rules to make our point.

I was thoroughly disappointed when after we did lose—even though we went up in the popular vote—that arbitrary number for party status. The Premier said, "The rules are the rules. Nothing we can do. They were changed once to accommodate New Democrats"—which, by the way, is not correct. The numbers were changed to accommodate the reduction in numbers in this Legislature, no matter who was sitting over here then. It had to be done. That wasn't quite correct.

What really bothers me is to hear a Premier and a government that's now cherry-picking which of the Mike Harris rules they're willing to change or not change. If it benefits them as a majority government to change a Mike Harris rule, then they will change it. But if the rule benefits them, they say, "Well, we won't change that rule. How can we? A rule is a rule," and then complain bitterly and be annoyed that New Democrats are actually



using the rules—as stupid as they may seem to you—to make our point when we’re denied the opportunity in this House to raise the issues that are of vital concern to our constituents. I mean that on a constituency riding level and the constituents I represent.

I am the critic for the environment—I have a long history in the environment—for women’s issues and as well now for democratic reform. I must say that I’m going to have fun with that one, given that I listened when the Attorney General stood up a couple of days in a row and talked so earnestly about democratic reform and how committed the Liberals are to it, while we sit here day after day and have our leader, who’s a former Attorney General in this province, who’s been a member sitting in this House on both sides for a number of years, having to ask for unanimous consent to ask one question way down the list—to have to go through that every day.

I want to say sincerely to the Liberals that there are some of you and some of your policies that I can work with and I want to work with. I mentioned a couple of people in particular whom I have a lot of respect for. There are many members I don’t know, and because of the animosity in this place from day one, I’ve never seen anything quite this bad. It’s unpleasant for all of us. Kathleen Wynne, the member for Don Valley West, will barely speak to me any more. She’s so angry sitting there on the rump, and some others, because of the way we carry on here. She won’t speak to me. That’s fine. God bless, if that’s where she’s at.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** I know. There are others who do. But I think it’s because some members, Kathleen is one, and others, were progressive. I knew them before and was expecting something different in this place, certainly not this, the kind of behaviour that we’ve seen here day after day in trying to get things through.

I want to say to the government members in all sincerity, the Tories have a different bent, so to speak, a different philosophy, a different view of life and how the world works, than we do—very different, and God bless. You know, they get up and ask their questions, but we’re going to ask different questions. We’re going to ask important questions, and I believe many of your members support our position on these. Not all of you, but some of you would agree that we need to be asking the kinds of questions that Ms Martel was asking tonight—the one question that our leader had today about building inspectors, questions around water inspectors. These are all people whom the Tories laid off. They need to be hired back, but you can bet that the Tories aren’t going to be asking those kinds of questions; they’re going to be pushing you more to the right. They are going to be asking you to cut services. They’re already doing it. They’re going to be suggesting that you actually cut more out of our public services.

We’re the ones who are going to be pulling you in the other direction. I say to all of you, you need that balance. You may think right now, “If we just shut up those pesky New Democrats”—which is what’s happened. It’s hard to do, isn’t it? I think about that game. What do you call

it? Is it gophers or something? A head comes up and you pound it down with a mallet and another one comes up. Then another one and another one. That’s what this place has felt like to me. For the first time since I was elected here in 1990—I’ve had frustrations, both in government and in opposition, but I’ve never felt like this before—it’s a daily frustration. I have things to say. My party has things to say. But you can’t shut us down, that’s what I’m getting at, no matter how hard you try. It is like that game: You pound one into the ground and another one pops up. Then you pound that one down and another one pops up, and on and on. We will continue to pop up. You’re not going to shut us down. You’re not going to shut us up.

I’m trying to say to you, what you are doing is wrong. It is just plain wrong. Yeah, we’re angry and we’re frustrated. So are a lot of the constituents out there, not just New Democrats, who feel that our voice is needed, particularly in view of the fact that many people voted for Liberals because they were tired of the Tories and Tory policies and the cutting and slashing and no longer believe that you can do more with less.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** What did I say?

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** Liberals are OK.

**Ms Churley:** Well, that’s what they thought. People thought when they voted for the Liberals, “We’re going to throw those guys out and we’re going to start anew, because the Liberals made all those promises and they’re not trying to say that we’re going to do more with less any more.”

So they voted for Liberals, and this is where we’re at. Now you are in a situation, and they find themselves in a situation, where there’s this big deficit which Liberals said in the campaign didn’t exist. We said it did. We know that Gerry Phillips said it did before the campaign, and Monte Kwinter, from the Liberals. Nonetheless, people believed the promises that were made and were very excited at the prospect of having a different government that would come in and do those things. Those people—and many of them are Liberals, not just New Democrats, progressive Liberals, even some Tories—want to see Liberals come up with a plan to be able to keep that promise, and not be completely obsessed with dealing with the deficit, because the Tories have left such an overwhelming social deficit. My colleague Shelley Martel was talking earlier about a few of them—old people in nursing homes, the environment, our education, children’s mental health. Every single area we can think of needs reinvestment. There’s no way around it.

Liberal members, Liberal cabinet ministers have got to try to find language now around it, because they know they are not going to be able to get the money to do those things. We have the new Minister of Children’s Services talking about how she’s going to break down the silos so there’s better communication, and somehow that’s going to help all those 12,000 children of waiting lists for mental health services? That’s just unbelievable and unacceptable, and breaking down silos is not going to

change that. It's about having to put those resources back—the same with our nursing homes, our environment, our education—all of those things. We've got to put the resources back because they're being cut way beyond the bone.

2030

Many Liberals ran on that platform. I know you did, because I read your platform and I heard some of you. Now, because of the deficit—let's leave aside whether or not you even knew about it, because I believe some of you didn't. I believe only a few members in your caucus knew that and you weren't told. You went out and made all those promises, and that's why—not just to get rid of the Tories—people voted for you. New Democrats are with you on that.

When I was a cabinet minister sitting over there, occasionally I would go over to a couple of my colleagues across the floor and say: "Could you start asking me questions on such and such? Because I'm having trouble. Money's tight. We're in a bad recession. I know we really need to do this thing, and I'm having trouble convincing my colleagues. I need you guys to kick up a fuss to help me convince my colleagues that this is important and we need to invest in it." You're not going to have the Tories do that.

In summary, what this is all about is a system that is no longer working for anybody, but in particular it is not working for the people of this province. Mr McGuinty should put his money where his mouth is and demonstrate that he meant it when he said he was going to enhance and improve democracy for all, including the opposition members so that they can better serve their constituents. He still has the opportunity to do that.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I don't believe it. The Liberals don't want to speak. The Conservatives don't want to speak. I find that rather interesting, considering that this is but the buildup to debating the throne speech. I would think that the members from the government would be standing four-square, all of them wanting to speak to this particular motion in order to talk about those promises they made in the last election. I'm rather surprised and a little bit disappointed, I must say, that the members from the government especially don't want to debate this particular motion.

I listen to the members across the way and they say, "What's the debate? It's just a motion to enable us to debate the throne speech," but I've just got to say that the most important thing a government does when they get here first of all is to keep the promises that they make to the electorate—and I want to talk to that specifically—and how they keep those promises is normally what they lay out in a throne speech. I would think that the Liberal members especially would want to be up in debate today, in order to talk about all those things that they were all excited to talk about in the last election.

I remember, as do all my colleagues here, Liberals, New Democrats and Conservatives, who ran in the last election as elected members today, and those who were not so fortunate. We all heard this debate, right? We saw the Liberals go out and talk about how they were against

the privatization of hospitals, and we found out that after this government was elected, one of the very first things they did was forget they made a promise in the last election. If we're going to have this debate tonight on the throne speech, or the ability to debate the throne speech, you would think that members would be getting up in this House and they would be talking about that particular promise.

I was on the campaign trail with all of you, and I remember my Liberal opponent saying, "Vote for me because we really mean it. We're going to cancel the privatization of hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa, and we're going to scrap those private MRIs and those private clinics that the Tories have put in place. You vote for us because we really mean it. Don't vote for the NDP guy. Bisson's a good guy, but at the end of the day he's not going to be in government, and the government's going to be the one to cancel all this stuff."

One of the first things the government, the Fiberals, did when they came here is they broke that promise—

**Interjection:** The Lie-berals.

**Mr Bisson:** —or the Lie-berals—they broke that promise they made to the people of Ontario.

I remember the candidate in my riding—as I remember other candidates around this province, as I watched the news during the September election—make a very specific campaign promise that they were going to stop the privatization of hospitals in the province, they were going to stop the privatization of clinics and they were going to stop the privatization of MRIs. What we've got at this point is a government that's saying, "Trust us. We're Liberals. We feel good. We're going to change the P3s, the private hospitals, from being a lease that the Conservatives set with up with private consortiums, to a mortgage." Somehow or other that's keeping a promise? I would think that a lot of Liberals would want to stand up tonight and explain that a little bit. Why is it that this government is not living up to its campaign promise?

I remember, for example, the member who is now the Chair of Management Board, Mr Phillips, Mr Caplan and a number of other Liberal members during this election and leading up to it saying they were going to review the deal on the 407, that basically the deal that the Tories negotiated and allowed the private consortium to get when it came to tolls was, in their view—and ours, as New Democrats—exorbitant and that they had to review the deal. They were going to basically come back and redo the deal so that Ontario motorists had a better deal. One of the first things this government said after it came back was, "Oops, we're Fiberals," or should I say Lie-berals. "We can't hold that promise," because of whatever reason they gave at the time.

I would think in this debate that the members from the Liberal caucus would want to get up and talk about why the Lie-berals/Fiberals didn't keep the campaign promise they made, because, after all, this is a debate on the motion to get to the throne speech. As I said at the beginning, the very important thing that you do when you get here, when you're elected, is—as they say in the English where I come from—you dance with the woman who



brought you. If you make promises to people, you've got to remember to keep them once you get elected. I think that's important. If there is a certain lack of trust in politicians and lack of confidence in the overall system, it's because people run and say one thing—I always say Liberals run as New Democrats and when they get elected they try to rule like Tories. People get a little bit worried. But on the 407, again, we're finding that the Liberals, or I should say the Fiberals, are not keeping to what they said in the last election.

Then we look at the whole issue of rate caps. This is the one I find really interesting. We, as New Democrats, said from the beginning, when the Conservative government moved to privatize Ontario Hydro and moved to deregulate the electricity market, that was the wrong way to go, that the basic thing we need to do in this province is to provide electricity at cost and to make sure that we have a proper supply of electricity when it comes to the province. When we did that—are you guys having a great conversation?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bisson:** I thought so. OK, thank you.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bisson:** I will in a minute, but I'm just wondering what that's all about.

I would just say, as I remember that particular debate, we ended up having the Liberals at the time, who basically jumped in bed with the Tories and said initially that they were in favour—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bisson:** They did jump in bed; they did. I remember Mike Harris left office and said, "I'm going to privatize Ontario Hydro and deregulate." Ernie Eves got elected as the new leader and he said, "I'm going to go ahead with Mike Harris's pledge to privatize and deregulate." What Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals did initially was jump in bed with the Tories and say, "We're all for privatization." I remember that letter. Remember that letter that Dalton McGuinty sent October 2001, which said, "We're on the side of industry, we're on the side of the private utility generators, and we stand for deregulation and privatization"? Howard Hampton and the New Democrats said that was wrong.

**Mr Marchese:** That was a \$300 dinner, wasn't it?

**Mr Bisson:** Yes, it was a \$300 fundraiser; that's why they sent the letter. But that's for another debate.

We said, as New Democrats, that was nuts. At the end of the day, you have to have a public utility that provides electricity at cost and does so in a constant supply for the economy of Ontario and the people who live here.

At first, not a lot of people were listening, but eventually, after May, when the hydro market opened, people just saw their bills go through the roof. They doubled. All of a sudden, the Liberals said: "Oh, God, we're wrong. Sorry. We want to flip-flop. We're now not in favour of market deregulation. We want to have a rate cap." Do you remember that? They pushed that they wanted to have a rate cap, because they said that this province couldn't afford to have high utility rates. Because of the push of Howard Hampton and the New Democrats,

eventually the Tories backed down and they put a rate cap in.

**2040**

I remember the vote. We had a vote in this Legislature. We said, "Rate caps are a weird way of dealing with it. The real way to deal with it is to keep electricity under public control. To put rate caps is only to subsidize the private sector." We said, "We don't want to hide the mess. At the end of the day, if the Tories want to fix the problem they created, they have to re-regulate electricity and make sure it's a public system."

The Liberals said, "We're in favour, with the Tories, of rate caps." So when the Tories proposed their legislation, the Liberals got up and supported the Tory legislation that created the rate caps. We voted in opposition, as you remember, because we said public power is the way to go.

Then the election happened, and Mr McGuinty stood up in the election and said, "Oh no, if you're asking me a question, media, on where I am on rate caps, I'm all for rate caps. I'd keep them in place." He said he'd keep the rate caps in place until 2006. I remember watching those interviews during the election when McGuinty was asked by the media and he said, "I would not scrap the rate caps if I was elected as Premier. I would keep them in place until 2006." What's the first thing the guy does when he gets elected? He goes, "I should have had a V8. I forgot the rate cap thing." He breaks another promise.

They wonder why the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail and the National Post are calling these guys Fiberals and Lie-berals? Because I've never seen a government break the amount of promises that this government has done in its first month in office. They broke their very basic promise around rate caps. This government has gone the other way.

**Mr Marchese:** Is it a big deal?

**Mr Bisson:** I think it's a very big deal.

**Mr Marchese:** Are you sure?

**Mr Bisson:** It's a huge deal. Listen, I think this is going to be part of this government's undoing. We'll have another debate on hydro as we go on—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** That's what I'm saying. We're going to have another debate on this. This spring, the bills will go up by a little bit. They're controlling what the bills will go up this year, so they'll go up a little bit: 30%—whoa, that's a little bit, on both distribution and generation. Wait until they open the market in May 2005.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Well, listen. Here goes a Liberal who says, "What's going to happen?" We said when the Tories opened the market that the rates would go through the roof, and I remember John Baird hanging off the edge of his seat, yelling, "You don't know what you're talking about, Howard Hampton," and Ernie Eves doing the same thing. What happened? Can you remind me?

**Ms Martel:** It was Stockwell.

**Mr Bisson:** It was Stockwell; that's right. He had to resign. That was another story.

The rates went through the roof, and that's what going to happen in 2005, because you can't have a partially deregulated system. You either have to go all the way, which I don't agree with, either you have to completely deregulate, which I think is disastrous, or you have to completely keep it under public control. To have a system—it's like being a little bit pregnant. You can't have a system—that's what you guys are trying to do as Liberals—where you say, "We're going to partially deregulate the system, but we're going to call it public." You expect (a) that the private sector will invest in that climate and (b) that prices are going to stay stable? It can't happen. You have to go one way or the other. The Tories wanted to go by way of deregulation. They couldn't do it, because the rates went through the roof. We're saying, you have to keep it under the public system.

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Just look at California, look at Ontario, look at Alberta, look at everywhere else where we have a private system. That's a debate for a little bit later.

My point is, the Liberals campaigned on not removing the rate caps and one of the first things they did was what? That's right, you got it; they removed the rate caps. And they wonder why they're called Lie-berals. They wonder why they're called Fiberals. You get called what you deserve, I guess, to a certain extent.

But then it gets a little bit more interesting: auto insurance. I ran the last campaign on auto insurance. That was part of my campaign. About 50% on the whole public power thing was auto insurance. We've been saying as New Democrats, we're getting people who are coming through our constituency offices across this province who have all kinds of horror stories that insurance on automobiles, trucks and houses has gone through the roof. We'll just talk about auto insurance for now. I ran in the last campaign and I said the only way to fix the system was to do a public system like we've got in Manitoba, like we've got in Saskatchewan or like we've got in BC. If you take a look at the system, you see that a 23-year-old who is driving a 1987 Chevette in Timmins, Ontario, in the system we have now in Ontario, pays how much? Four thousand six hundred dollars, with no accident, a perfect driving record.

The same driver with the same Chevette in Manitoba, how much does he pay? He pays \$700. They stand here and they say, "Oh, public auto doesn't work." I don't know; I'm a ratepayer. I'm a guy who buys insurance like everybody else. So \$700 versus \$4,600? It seems to me they're doing something right in Manitoba and they're doing something wrong in the province of Ontario.

So this government comes in and says, "We're going to fix the problem. We're going to freeze rates and roll them back," they said in the last election. So they come into this particular campaign, they say they're going to fix the problem, they get elected, they bring in a bill that they say, they purport, is going to freeze rates temporarily. They don't talk about reduction.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, later. Mike Colle is going to fix that.

**Mr Bisson:** Do you believe that?

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, yeah. Mike is going to fix it.

**Mr Bisson:** Listen, I believe in Santa Claus; Christmas is around the corner, all right?

But anyway, in this particular instance they're saying they're going to freeze rates temporarily, but when you look at the bill, there's no such thing as freezing rates because section 6 says, what? "Go to it. If there's anything you have as an insurance company that means to say you've got to raise your rates, it's all right. Go before the superintendent of insurance and get your rate increase."

Of course, insurance companies have never done that in the past. How do you think insurance companies have got rate increases up to now? They've gone to the superintendent of insurance and have said, "I'm sorry, Mr Cratchit, I am so poor. I'm losing all kinds of money. My insurance company can't afford to pay any more and we need more money. We're broke." They've been doing that for years, and these guys have put this inside the clause, so I just say, why are the Liberals—or I should say the Lie-berals, the Fiberals—not getting up in this debate, talking about why they broke some of those promises in the last election?

The last one I want to spend a little bit more time on is what they're doing around democracy. I remember in the last Parliament, every time the Tories got up, and that was on each and every bill, and moved the time allocation motion on Wednesdays—because you can set your clock to the Tories. What would happen on Wednesdays in his House? You would have a time allocation motion. You knew if it was Wednesday, you were in the province of Ontario and the Tories were in government, they were time-allocating a bill somewhere.

I remember those members across the way, the now Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Health—remember the Minister of Education? He was the best one, Mr Kennedy—my good friend Mr Bartolucci, the Minister of Northern Development—every time they got up and they moved a time allocation motion, the Fiberals would get up and they'd say, "Oh, this is an affront to democracy. We can't have real debate. When we become government, we're going to be different."

Boy, were they different. They're not doing time allocation any more. They've imported something from the UK—for people who don't know what we're talking about, England, the mother of all Parliaments—and they've got the mother of all time allocation motions. Never mind that the Tories used to give us three days for debate. You know, the scrooges who stole democracy across the way—because it is a Christmas season—are now giving us a day, and I guess we should feel very humbled and grateful that the Liberals—I should say the Fiberals—give us one day to debate a bill.

Today we have this motion. Under the Tory rules, under section 46, if this motion came before the House, you would have three days of debate. The Fiberals break their democracy pledge and now change the rules in this



House by way of this motion they did last week that says, "We don't want you having three days. We're different. We don't believe in time allocation motions that only limit debates to three days. Darn it, we're going to have one."

I'm just saying, you guys are going backwards. You were supposed to increase democracy, not decrease it. And they wonder why New Democrats on this side are getting somewhat upset with this government, because we're saying we believe in democracy.

**Mr Marchese:** Send the laws by e-mail.

**Mr Bisson:** Well, that's where they want to go, but that's another debate.

We believe that, quite frankly, for democracy to work around this place, there has to be debate in this House that is a two-way debate. I accept as an opposition member that at the end of the day the government has to have its bill. I accept that, and I know at the end of the day they're going to get their bill, but they have to be held accountable. How do you do that? One, by question period, by making sure that each and every day in this assembly, members of this House, including New Democrats, can stand in this House and hold government accountable to the decisions they make.

2050

When they break a promise on hydro or they break a promise on 407 or they break a promise on private hospitals or they break a promise—God—on democracy, you have to allow New Democrats—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** The Tories aren't going to ask those questions.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** Well, we're not going to taunt the Tories tonight, but for ideological reasons, and let's say for reasons of convenience, they're not going to ask questions of the Liberals on that.

How can democracy work if you don't allow the members of the opposition to ask questions? The government across the way is playing this cute little game that says, "Oh, we're being good to you. We're going to give you a question. Right down at the bottom of the order when all the media is out of here, you can have a question. Not a problem. Mr Hampton, do you want a question? You can have a question way down at the bottom of the order."

Somehow or other, as New Democrats, we're supposed to be happy with that? We're saying to you, if you really believe what you said prior to the election and you believe what you said during the election—because certainly you didn't believe it after you got elected—you've got to believe that for a government to work there has to be real democracy in this assembly. Everything you guys have done up to now indicates, quite frankly, that you don't want real democracy. You want to have a question period where you have fluffballs being raised by your backbenchers, who say, "Minister, can I ask you when you are coming to our riding and when you're

going to talk to the people of my riding about this very important issue?"

I say, send a memo. Lean over and talk to the minister. He's only three benches over. I can do that myself. I would never get up as an opposition member and ask that question because you can set that up pretty easily with a one-to-one meeting. If you're going to have democracy work in this place, you have to have real questions; you have to have real debate. I was hoping that this government, at the end of the day, would see reason and deal with the issues before this House right now when it comes to the participation not only of New Democrats but of all members of this House to make sure that democracy is meaningful. The day we go down the path where we say, "Government knows best and we don't have to give the right to opposition," is the day that we give in to some of the things that we fought against so hard for many years of wars around this world. I say to the members, let's see you stand up and defend what you did by way of this motion, in terms of how you are treating the opposition or anybody else.

**Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton):** I'm not going to be long on this, because it's a motion to have the throne speech debate. Really, we should get into the throne speech debate and discuss things there. But I do want to say with regard to the speakers from the New Democratic Party that they do make a valid point; that is, that this government has not been very generous with the opposition parties. It started off—and I was on the transition team for my party, trying to get ministers moved out of their accommodation, into accommodation here at the parliamentary buildings. I was all set to meet with the government to deal with the moving of the ministers out of their offices so the new cabinet that was going to be sworn in on October 23 could in fact move into their premises.

Well, there was a delay. The Premier's office was hiring on all these political operatives from Chrétien's operation and they were having a lot to say about what was going to happen here down at Queen's Park when they got in control. So we sat down, finally, after about a week and half or two weeks, while our ministers were trying to move out of their offices to accommodate the changeover, which I think is a responsible thing to do when ministers are moving out of their offices. But when we finally sat down, what had transpired was that the new Liberal government, through their political operatives—I don't really think the members from the Liberal benches were involved in this; I don't think that even the cabinet ministers were aware of it. But it was obvious that the leadership, Mr McGuinty, had turned over to political operatives a big part of his decision-making at that time.

So when we sat down and we started talking about office space, our party said, "Let's ask the Clerk's office what they recommend will be the most economical, smoothest transition that can take place in the Legislative Building." And they gave us a plan which basically we agreed with, which gave the opposition the third floor, which has been the tradition in this place for a long, long

time. The opposition party basically got the third floor, and you had the Leader of the Opposition in one corner of the building and the rest of the members spread around. Well, this didn't work, because the new regime wanted to move the cabinet offices from the Whitney Block, a building across the street connected by a tunnel. What the new political operatives wanted to do was really to occupy the Legislative Assembly building, the Legislature building, which had really come into the hands of the members of the Legislative Assembly since—about 1988, a transition took place.

This place used to be run by the Ministry of Government Services of the government of Ontario. The parking lot attendants, the cleaning staff, all the people who were supplying all the services here were hired essentially by the government of Ontario, even though the Legislative Assembly was operating here. But we made a shift. There was a shift that I think Premier Peterson, Premier Rae, and finally Premier Harris put the final marks to. That was that this building, save and except for a small corner of it, where you were going to have your cabinet meetings and an office where the Premier could meet with people in the corner of this building, was going to be the precinct and there for the members of this Legislature.

What happened was that these political operatives that Mr McGuinty has brought in wanted to take over a significant part of this building, so much so that they occupied 13 former MPPs' offices. What this did was that it then meant that the government House leader could not deliver to the opposition, our party, what had been traditionally the opposition area, the third floor of this assembly.

I realize that a lot of the people watching this would say, "Well, this is pretty petty." And it is pretty petty, it is pretty small peanuts, but I think it is an indication that this government and this Premier don't get it. He doesn't get the separation that is necessary between the cabinet of Ontario and the other members of this Legislative Assembly. There has to be a separation. The separation is healthy. The separation is right. By moving some of his minions over here, occupying essentially the whole east wing of this building, the first, second and third floors, it's not only an inconvenience for the opposition party but it's also an indication that he really doesn't get it in terms of how we have been transforming this place into a place where MPPs can feel comfortable, where they can go to their Speaker, who's in control of this building and all the services associated with it, can take their complaints to him and that it's different from the government of Ontario. The government of Ontario essentially was across the street, out of these precincts.

So that was number one. We had some arguments over it, and I wasn't pleased. Our leader wasn't pleased. The opposition is now in four different places in this building. It's a minor inconvenience, but it's petty. It smacks of people like Warren Kinsella and those kinds of people, who really want to put it to the opposition. They want to show their muscle. They're pretty, pretty strong people.

## 2100

So then the next step. Even before there were any consultations with our party, the Premier of the day says that the NDP aren't going to get party status, and the Premier of the day says, "We're going to make new standing orders." No consultation with us. They didn't phone us and say, "Mr Eves, what do you think of how the standing orders are going to be changed to accommodate these seven independent members?" When we change the standing orders in this place, we do require consultation. Even though you have a majority, the process, the tradition is that you talk to all of the parties and you talk to them about what those changes should be, because the institution of the Legislative Assembly is important to carry on from Parliament to Parliament. It just shows a lack, I think, on the part of the Premier, that he doesn't really understand or respect the institution to the degree that I would have thought he would have, taking all of the talk that he had during the election about reforming democracy in this place.

Then there's this little game that he's played here. He's got the New Democrats way down there. He's got the rump here. I guess there's one kind of cheek for one side and another kind of cheek for the other side. I think that this is silliness on the part of the Premier, and it smacks of the Warren Kinsella kind of thing, "We're going to really put it to these guys," and all the rest of it.

I guess the other part, too, is, we—my House leader—were negotiating who are going to be committee chairs. The tradition that we have in this place is that the estimates committee, the public accounts committee and the appointments committee have always been chaired by opposition people, for obvious reasons. Because those committees are asking the government to bring forward their plans, they are critical by their nature and should be chaired by opposition members; they shouldn't be chaired by members of the government. So I rose in the House today, as you know, and asked the Premier about the fact that he was appointing to our agencies committee, which reviews all the government appointments—why is he appointing a Liberal backbencher?

One of the other moves that this Premier has made, which makes it even worse, is that he has now appointed every member of the caucus to a cabinet committee. He thinks that that's inclusive, and that's wonderful, and all the rest of it. Maybe some of the members think it is, but, again, you've forgotten the separation between the cabinet and other members of the Legislature. How are these members of the agencies committee, who are backbenchers who sit on cabinet committees, going to separate themselves from the cabinet when it comes to cabinet appointments? Will they not feel an obligation to support each and every appointment that the cabinet of Ontario makes to an agency, board or commission?

We have another misunderstanding of how the traditions of this institution are operating. We had a bill introduced today about accountability of cabinet ministers. People should read this, because it is a real joke. It is an unbelievable joke. It says that a cabinet minister must be



here two thirds of the time. Quite frankly, when Mike Harris was the Premier, he insisted that all cabinet ministers be there, save and except when they were out doing other kinds of business. It's different for different kinds of cabinet ministers, depending upon the kinds of tasks that cabinet minister has. By having the Premier keep the report card, what kind of accountability is that? Because if the Premier marks down a black mark for a cabinet minister, guess who's going to get criticized? The Premier. Well, the cabinet minister will get criticized too, but the Premier will be criticized for choosing this person to be part of his cabinet. So we have the fox in charge of the chicken house. It's a silly bill too, because there are loopholes that you can go through: "These kinds of absences won't count; these ones won't. You don't have to stay for the whole thing if the Premier thinks you should go and do something else," and all the rest of it.

Listen, when I was a cabinet minister, from time to time I had to leave this place to go back to Ottawa or whatever, where my constituency is, or I had to go do some business. I would go across the floor and ask the House leader for the New Democratic Party and the House leader for the Liberals, "Do you have any questions for me today?" And they would say, "No, Norm, I don't have any questions for you." I'd say, "Do you mind if I leave?" and I would leave. That would be the proper way to do it. But I consulted with the opposition, because it was their time to ask me about it. Now the Premier's going to have the cabinet minister go down and talk to him about whether they should leave or not.

I guess the sum total of all of this is, the New Democratic Party speakers, when they were talking—all of them have a great deal of experience here, as perhaps I do. It doesn't matter what rules the government puts together. You guys have 72 members. You can ram through any rules you want here. But if you do not have co-operation on this side from opposition members, you will have a hell of a time in the next four years trying to get your legislation through, because they will be able to stop, they will be able to drag, they will be able to do all kinds of things to you, regardless of the rules you set up.

We were very successful when we were 20 members, with the NDP. We were 16 members, the third party, from 1987 to 1990. We could stop the government too. The rules do change from time to time, and I think the rules have to change. I think actually they should be changed now to allow the third party to have party status, because when we made the rule to go from 12 to eight, part of the philosophy behind doing that was that we went from 130 members to 103, and so it was somewhat proportional, going from 12 to eight. But eight was an arbitrary number; it could have been seven. The third party had nine at that point in time, and we thought we'd pick eight as the number at that time, but it's an arbitrary number.

You have to look at what the people of Ontario said to us as politicians in the last election. They said you guys are the government. You got 46% of the vote. We're in opposition. You got 72 seats. We got 24, with about 34%

or 35%. So you're far overrepresented there with regard to the number of seats you got with the popular vote you got. But the NDP got 15% of the vote and they only got seven seats. Given the fact that they got 15% of the vote, not quite half what we got but about a third of what you got, about a third of your popular vote, I don't think there's anybody in Ontario who thinks that they shouldn't have party status. I think it's healthy for the Parliament, healthy for the government to have them as an opposition party.

As I was saying to one of the reporters not too long ago, when Premier McKenna won all of the seats in New Brunswick, didn't have one member in opposition, he made a special effort to go to the other parties, and he said to them, "I want to give you research dollars. I want you to be able to function as parties, even though you haven't won one seat in our Legislature." He did that because he knew that if he was allowed to languish in the luxury of not having anybody call him or his ministers to account, eventually his government would be in trouble. I think McKenna was a pretty strong Premier, as everybody in this Legislature probably believes that he was a pretty strong Premier.

I guess the summary of my remarks is that I understand what this government has said in the election, but your actions afterwards have shown a significant amount of arrogance, arrogance that will not only cost you in the future, but it's going to cost you now when we have to sit here night after night, not talking about real issues but about issues that don't deserve our time.

I urge the government of the day to listen more closely to the New Democratic Party in terms of allowing them to participate the way they should in this Legislature so that we can avoid the kind of debate and waste of time that we have had. I don't blame them for wasting your time tonight. I don't blame them for doing what they are doing, because they have no other choice. You're showing the arrogance to encourage them to continue this.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

On November 25, 2003, Mr Caplan moved that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration as early as the first sessional day following passage of this motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry?

All in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have received a document from the chief government whip asking that this vote be deferred until routine proceedings tomorrow.

**Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? The motion carries.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 2112.*

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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 10 December 2003**

**Mercredi 10 décembre 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### ROBERT BOYER

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I rise today to recognize Robert James Boyer, a former member of provincial Parliament in this legislature and one of the original sons of Muskoka.

Robert, or Bob as he is known in Muskoka, was born in 1913 in Bracebridge in the family home. His birth in 1913 marked the third generation of writers and newspaper editors in Bracebridge. At age 19, he launched his career as a young newspaper editor at the Herald. Bob completed his senior matriculation while working full time at the Herald. Robert married Patricia Mary Johnson in 1940, and together they raised three children, each of whom has been an accomplished writer in their own right.

During World War II, Bob served with the Canadian Army's Ordnance Corps in Longue-Pointe, Montreal, where in addition to his duties he became the editor of *The Longue Pointer*.

In June 1955, Bob began his political life when he was elected as the member of provincial Parliament for Muskoka in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Despite this, he continued as editor of the newspaper. He represented the people of Muskoka for 16 years.

During his tenure he was instrumental in the establishment of the Pines Home for the Aged, the Ontario Fire College, new buildings for the work of provincial ministries, the Port Carling locks renewal and new control dams on the river, and the reorganization of municipal and educational governments.

In 1971, Bob retired from public life as the elected representative of Muskoka. He has served the people of Muskoka with honour and dignity, and enhanced the community of Muskoka through his words and deeds. I would like to congratulate Bob on celebrating his 90th birthday this weekend, December 14, in Bracebridge at the Pines.

#### CHRISTKINDL MARKET

**Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** Last Thursday, December 4, I had the honour of participating in the

opening of Kitchener's seventh annual Christkindl Market. Christkindl markets are held worldwide and trace their origin back to 14th century Germany, when churchgoing farmers would set up stalls to sell farm produce, figurines, toys, food and clothing prior to Christmas.

Over 1,500 people participated in an opening candle-light procession from Victoria Park to the city hall, where they were greeted by music, speeches and entertainment. The market itself boasted dozens and dozens of vendors selling an impressive array of food, gifts, toys and clothing, much of it with a German theme. Blacksmith demonstrations, puppet shows for the kids, choirs and festive Christmas decorations made this a wonderful family event.

Kitchener's Christkindl Market is Canada's original and attracts over 25,000 visitors every year. In 1999, it was named one of the best new festivals in Ontario and, in 2000 was identified as one the province's top 10 events.

I would like to congratulate Tony Bergmeier, the founder of Kitchener's Christkindl Market, Astrid Braun, his co-chair, and Monica Reid, along with the wonderful team of volunteers who made the special event possible.

Christkindl Market is held annually in Kitchener, extending over the five days ending with the second Sunday of Advent. I invite all members of the Legislature and all Ontarians to attend next year's market and help celebrate Kitchener's proud German heritage.

#### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** Everyone in this House has heard the Liberals claim, as if it was a holy mantra, that they have inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit. The Liberals are so adamant about this bogus number that the Premier and his finance minister have been heard repeating it time and time again. It appears that they think the more they repeat the bogus deficit number, the more they will be able to make it stick on the previous government.

Yesterday, John Williamson from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation revealed a more accurate picture for the province of Ontario. Williamson said, "The Liberal government has overplayed its hand." He went on to say on behalf of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that "the Liberals are making the province's fiscal situation appear worse than it actually is." Can you imagine that, Mr



Speaker? The Liberals are trying to make the financial situation appear worse.

There is more. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation was blunt and direct when they said that any deficit over \$600 million will be a Liberal deficit, caused by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals. What we have here is a Liberal deficit. It is a bogus deficit. We are on to Dalton, and Ontarians are starting to figure out that Liberals cannot be trusted with our hard-earned money, nor we can trust Liberal math.

#### YORK RAPID TRANSIT

**Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham):** York region is adding 40,000 new residents and thousands upon thousands of new jobs each year. This has resulted in some major challenges for our municipalities, such as bumper-to-bumper traffic and unprecedented development. For every 100 cars that travel into downtown Toronto each day, there are 80 cars heading into York region. In my home community of Markham, municipal leaders have recognized the need to plan ahead. Markham centre has been recognized as a leading national example of sustainable community planning and should be held up as a model for other rapidly growing communities. I believe that the York rapid transit plan will serve as a cornerstone of the centre's growth strategy.

The region is building a bus rapid transit system in three stages, with construction on the first phase beginning next year. By 2005, there will be rapid transit vehicles moving passengers throughout the region and beyond, getting thousands of cars off our roads. The first phase has funding commitments of \$50 million each from the region, the provincial and the federal governments. I think we would all agree that by proceeding with projects like the York rapid transit plan, we can make driving through the GTA a choice and not a necessity. I believe this to be very wonderful opportunity for us to demonstrate our government's commitment to public transit and sustainable development.

#### HYDRO RATES

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** My constituents are frustrated with the promise breakers and tax hikers in this Liberal government. Not only have they increased business taxes, which will drive jobs and opportunity out of Ontario, they have increased taxes on those who need help the most. Farmers will be particularly hard hit. The Liberal hydro rate increase will cost farmers \$42 million a year, according to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Murray Porteous, of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, says of the Liberal hydro rate increases, "This is a huge blow to agriculture."

Allan Gardiner, of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, has written, "Farmers can't pay more for electricity. Our net incomes are dropping—it just isn't

possible to stay in business when production costs are outstripping the prices farmers get for their produce."

Farmers use most of their power during off-peak hours, when demand is lowest and the power is cheapest. They deserve a price that reflects their use, not one that will put them out of business.

Conservation is not a practical alternative for them. Milk coolers, poultry barns and greenhouses are just a few examples of power they use that can't be cut back.

I call on the Minister of Agriculture to start speaking up for Ontario's farmers. Do not join in the McGuinty government's war on farmers and small business. Do what's right for Ontario's job creators.

1340

#### JAMES GRECO

**Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie):** It's my privilege to recognize the contributions of an individual who has given so much to the city of Sault Ste Marie. Ontario Court Justice James Greco held court until the day before his 75th birthday this past month, the mandatory age of retirement set by the province. He spent nearly 36 years on the bench and retired as the longest-sitting judge in Ontario.

Judge James Greco was appointed to the provincial court bench by former Attorney General and Sault Ste Marie MPP Arthur Wishart in 1968. He graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1959, and was awarded the Queen Elizabeth medal and the Sault Ste Marie medal of merit for his contributions to the community.

Some of his community involvement included being a member of the board of directors of the Sault Ste Marie General Hospital for 24 years; director of the Algoma Regional School of Nursing for eight years; chair of the Sault Ste Marie Salvation Army; and member of the Algoma University board of governors and senate. He was also a founding member of the advisory board for the establishment of a native diversionary justice system at Garden River First Nation Reserve.

He has taught law for 25 years at Algoma University, authored a text entitled *Bail-Canada*, and written numerous articles, which have appeared in journals such as the *Criminal Law Quarterly*.

I want to thank Justice James Greco for his commitment and service to our provincial court system and for his continued participation and leadership in numerous organizations within our city.

I also want to congratulate Kristine Bignell of Sault Ste. Marie on being selected to replace Judge Greco by our Attorney General, the honourable member from St. Paul's. Ms Bignell, we wish you well in your new position.

#### TAXATION

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** Today being the inaugural Taxpayers' Day at Queen's Park, it gives me great pleasure to welcome farmers,

small business people, seniors, parents of children who attend independent schools and others sitting in our public gallery. Many have travelled hundreds of miles to bring this government the message: Keep your promise. Don't raise taxes.

These people are worried in the wake of Bill 2, the largest tax hike in Ontario history. They're worried about the future of their businesses, their farms, their jobs and their children's education as this government takes more from their wallets and erases the very foundation on which the last eight years of prosperity have been built.

They wonder why this is being done, when only a couple of months ago the present Premier told everyone, "I will not cut your taxes, but I won't raise them either," over and over again on television. "I will not cut your taxes, but I won't raise them either."

There are too many here today who feel they've been led down the Liberal garden path leading to tax increases that we were told would not be part of the Liberal agenda. Talk about the Grinch who stole Christmas. Truly, Dalton McGuinty has given new meaning to the terms "tax hiker" and "promise-breaker."

On that note, I welcome people in the gallery: Terry Sannesaal and other farmers are here from Norfolk, Oxford, Brant and, I will mention, Elgin county.

### RED HILL EXPRESSWAY

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I rise today to bring to the attention of the House another cynical Tory flip-flop, this time in regard to the Red Hill expressway. While in government, they supported the expressway. While in government they went to the chamber of commerce and to the business community in Hamilton and said, "We support the Red Hill expressway."

What did we hear last week? The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant rose in the House to ask the Minister of the Environment for a review of the expressway project in Hamilton. What has changed, except cynical opportunism by a desperate Tory party, by a Tory party that's out of touch with the people of Hamilton? Why all of a sudden?

We all remember former Premier Mike Harris cutting the ribbon for the east-west portion of the expressway. We all remember the local Tory candidates soliciting funds in their fundraising letters, saying to the business community, "We support the Red Hill Expressway in Hamilton."

The Liberal Party has been firm and consistent on it. We support the expressway; we have supported the expressway from day one. There has been a full environmental assessment, and the expressway is in the best interests of the community. I ask the Tories: Why the change of heart? Why the change of mind? Why have you betrayed the people of Hamilton by telling them when you were in government that you supported it and now, as an opposition party, you find a cheap, political, convenient way out and oppose it? It is shameful. It is a

sign of a party that is out of touch with reality, out of touch with the people of Hamilton, and out of power.

### POLICE SERVICES

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I think they're still in government, aren't they?

I rise in the House today in support of the policemen and policewomen who serve us on the front lines every day in communities across Ontario.

The release of a report on racial profiling by the Ontario Human Rights Commission has unfortunately placed police in a position of defending their very existence. The Police Association of Ontario has informed me that the terms of reference for the commission's report excluded police from participating. This is disturbing and discriminatory.

What worries me even more is that Monte Kwinter and the Liberal government were so quick to praise this report and make more promises about acting on its recommendations. I have to ask why.

Minister Kwinter has been in his new portfolio for two months and he's already targeting police. Yesterday, the minister said he will act now on the recommendations to install cameras in police cruisers, yet other emergency services personnel, including ambulance workers and firefighters, have been spared this Big Brother treatment.

The only reasons that video cameras should ever be installed in police cruisers would be for the safety of our police officers and for investigative purposes. Any other reason would show a complete lack of trust and discrimination against the very people who allow Ontarians to live in a safe and civil society.

Furthermore, any attempt by the Liberals to pay for the cameras instead of making due on their promise of 1,000 new police officers would be outrageous.

Our caucus will not allow the minister to make whipping boys and girls out of the fine men and women who serve and protect us. They deserve much better from the minister and from this government.

### QUESTION PERIOD

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** Fergie Jenkins, Eric Gagne, Roy Halladay; these names will go down in history as some of the best hardball pitchers Canada has ever produced. But when it comes to pitching softballs, these guys can't hold a candle to Dalton McGuinty and his trained myrmidon in the Liberal backbenches. They're softball Hall-of-Famers.

Each day, they waste almost half of question period asking questions that cabinet ministers wrote for themselves. Why do they do that? The answer is very obvious: because Dalton McGuinty fears tough questions. If the Liberals stop the softballs, opposition MPPs would ask McGuinty hardball questions like: You promised to keep hydro public, so why don't you rule out selling off Darlington and Pickering? You promised



dignity for our seniors, so when are you going to mandate more care for our seniors and admit that your strategy of tears and volunteers just doesn't cut it? You promised to take human rights violations seriously, so when are you going to stand up for visible minorities, admit racial profiling exists and finally take action?

I say to Dalton McGuinty and his softball Hall-of-Famers: Playing games with public accountability is bad news for good government. Live up to your promise to make government more effective, responsive and accountable to the people. Stop the softball questions and face the hardball questions Ontarians want answered in this Legislature.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** There's a lot of talking in the chamber. I would ask members to keep their voices down.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to increase the penalties for contraventions of the Act and regulations / *Projet de loi 20, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en vue d'augmenter les peines en cas d'infraction aux dispositions de la Loi et des règlements.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** This bill amends section 66 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to increase the penalties for individuals and corporations for contraventions of the act and regulations, and to make directors and officers of corporations liable for contraventions of the act and regulations by those corporations.

1350

## VISITORS

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Members would like to welcome Ms Anne Veres and the grade 5 class from Ormiston Public School in Whitby, Ontario, Canada.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I'm going to ask all members in the future that when you have a point of order—that was not a point of order, to begin with—we could do that in a much more programmed way.

### ONTARIO WATER RESOURCES AMENDMENT ACT (WATER SOURCE PROTECTION), 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RESSOURCES EN EAU DE L'ONTARIO (PROTECTION DES SOURCES D'ALIMENTATION EN EAU)

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection / *Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en eau de l'Ontario en ce qui concerne la protection des sources d'alimentation en eau.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** This is a bill I'm reintroducing. I introduced it in the last Legislature. It amends the Ontario Water Resources Act in regard to availability and conservation of Ontario water.

Specifically, the bill requires the director to consider the Ministry of the Environment's statement of environmental values when making any decision under the act. The bill also requires that municipalities and conservation authorities are notified of applications to take water, which, if granted, may affect their water sources or supplies. This was the most important recommendation from the Walkerton inquiry by Justice O'Connor. This bill offers the framework so we can move forward on source protection in this province.

### TOMMY DOUGLAS ACT (PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS), 2003

#### LOI TOMMY DOUGLAS DE 2003 SUR LA DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DES PATIENTS

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to promote patients' rights / *Projet de loi 22, Loi visant à promouvoir les droits des patients.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** This is the third time I've introduced this bill, which establishes patients' rights for health care in Ontario. At one point it did pass second reading, but it was blocked by the Conservative majority from further consideration in committee.

If passed, the bill would codify the rights of residents of Ontario to receive health care services. It would provide for the appointment of a health care standards commissioner, who would be an officer of the Legislature, who would participate in the setting of health care standards and the development of a complaint procedure, monitoring health care standards and making recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for changes to legislation and changes to health policy.

The bill established whistle-blower protection for the employees and providers of health care services, and it requires the posting of the patients' bill of rights and the whistle-blower protection provisions.

## HOUSE SITTINGS

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent, without debate or amendment, that the House not sit tonight, Wednesday, December 10.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is there unanimous consent?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I can hardly hear you with the heckling over there. That's why it's difficult for me to repeat what you said.

Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Given that we want the NDP to have their three questions, and given that we want them to participate in Opposition Day, could we have unanimous consent to move government notice of motion number 5, without debate or amendment.

**The Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask unanimous consent that the leader of the third party get two lead questions following the Tories, followed by a third question by a member of the third party.

**The Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** I understand there is unanimous consent for all three parties—

**Interjection:** Deferred vote.

**Hon Mr Bryant:** Could I just stand down, Mr Speaker. I understand we have a motion from the government House leader and/or a deferred vote.

**The Speaker:** Would you stay your request until later on. I'll indicate.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** We have a deferred vote on the motion by Mr Caplan that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration as early as the first sessional day following passage of this motion.

There will be a five-minute bell. Call in the members.

*The division bells rang from 1359 to 1404.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Eves, Ernie	Oraziotti, David
Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Baird, John R.	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jackson, Cameron	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Kennedy, Gerard	Runciman, Robert W.
Brownell, Jim	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Chudleigh, Ted	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Tascona, Joseph N.
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Yakabuski, John
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Zimmer, David
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise.

### Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 86; the nays are 6.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** I understand there is unanimous consent for all three parties to make a statement for up to five minutes each regarding International Human Rights Day.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Are you agreed? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Bryant:** Each December 10, Ontario marks International Human Rights Day. This is a day to remember that we all have a part to play in ensuring equity and fairness in our society. It's a day to recognize the inherent right of all the world's citizens to a life of dignity, equality, tolerance and non-discrimination. It's a day to remind ourselves how precious these rights are and how they should be never be taken for granted.

Fifty-five years ago today, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. This was a great Canadian export. A McGill University professor—a Canadian—helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was a picture of Canada's social decency and social democracy that became a model for the world. This declaration forms the cornerstone of international human rights to which all people



are entitled, and it's the basis of the Ontario Human Rights Code, which was enacted in 1962.

Over the past four decades, Ontario has built a record of leadership in this important area. We've become one of the most diverse communities in the world, and this government will take action to strengthen our international reputation as a province of tolerance, civility and respect. We champion and safeguard the human rights of our citizens, and we advance these rights and build upon them as times and needs evolve.

When our government took office, we immediately fulfilled our promise to relocate the Ontario Human Rights Commission under the auspices of the Ministry of the Attorney General. We believe that human rights violations must be taken seriously, and I'm committed to treating human rights issues with the gravity they deserve.

We also seek to celebrate and leverage the diversity of our multicultural community. We welcome steps to address any conflicts or tensions that affect our citizens. It is surely the very crux of Canadian civility and equality that we all respect equal protection under the law.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission yesterday issued a report detailing hundreds of personal stories—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I regard this as a very important statement. I'm hearing a lot of talk across the hall. I'd rather the member get an opportunity to finish his statement in that sort of process.

1410

**Hon Mr Bryant:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I hope you'll be a little bit liberal with the time since I lost some time as a result. I'll leave that to your discretion.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission yesterday issued a report detailing hundreds of personal stories that powerfully illustrate the human cost of stereotyping and racism. I say in the name of the very quintessential Canadian ideals of civility and equality and social decency that I believe it is important we put behind us this debate about whether or not racial profiling is perception or reality. It is not about picking sides. It is about making progress. The time has come for us to take action and to tackle these challenges in all parts of government and in all parts of our society.

Part of the Ontario Human Rights Commission's mandate is to raise awareness, and this report is going to be a powerful tool to that end. This government will be carefully considering the report and its recommendations. All ministers will be considering the report and its recommendations.

Issues of stereotyping and racism can affect all parts of a government and society. Without vigilance every single day, a government will never be doing enough. We want all our children to grow up and succeed in a climate of equal opportunity. Our commitment to human rights is just one of the many reasons we are very fortunate to live in this country. In other parts of the world, we see the constant struggle to gain the rights that should be available to all.

On International Human Rights Day, let us join together in our hope that the universal commitment to human rights is continually strengthened, that every person in every corner of the globe has the freedom to pursue individual goals and fulfill their potential to the utmost, and that Canada will continue to be a leader in this regard across the world. It is of course our hope that Ontario will play a leadership role within Confederation in this regard. Let us celebrate the towering respect for human rights that lies at the heart of this province.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** It's an honour to speak on International Human Rights Day. Fifty-five years ago, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ontario has a proud record of leadership in protecting human rights. Take, for example, our first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe. Mr Simcoe, acting as a leader of our province, took dramatic steps to prevent slavery from making a home in Upper Canada. His actions paved the way for Ontario to become a refuge for many slaves through the Underground Railroad. Unlike the rest of North America, we began recognizing and protecting human rights in this province from almost day one of our inception. For this we can all be proud.

International Human Rights Day is about exposing tyranny, dictatorships and corrupt regimes around the globe, regimes that seek to deny basic freedoms to the people. We should not be politically correct when we speak of these nations. Let us not be blinded by colour or religion when we seek to promote universal human rights. Countries like China, Zimbabwe, Iran, Burma, Saudi Arabia, Haiti, Cuba, and many others rank as some of the worst violators of human rights. In these nations, the people do not enjoy freedom of the press, protection of the rule of law, democratic elections that are open and transparent. They do not enjoy the security of the person from the police or the army who act as henchmen for tyrants.

On this day, let us applaud the actions taken by Canadians to aid in the liberation of Afghanistan and Iraq. Let us applaud our firm position as a nation on Zimbabwe's role in the Commonwealth. In so doing, let us reflect on our core values, which make this province and this country great, and commit to spreading our democratic values and beliefs to those regions of the world whose citizens still live in fear.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** I'm pleased once again to speak on behalf of New Democrats here in this Parliament on this celebration, this recognition, this acknowledgement of International Human Rights Day. It's so easy to speak about this in platitudes and clichés, and to speak in the broad and the general, and to speak about ourselves as somehow so superior to jurisdictions, nations and regimes in other parts of the world.

Let's talk about human rights. Let's talk about the human rights of thousands of children and young people in this province, children with autism who have been denied their right to treatment for that autism for over eight years by the Conservatives, and now by this gov-

ernment too, by this Liberal government in Ontario. My goodness, had the Attorney General wanted to speak meaningfully about human rights, he would have stood up today and stated clearly that the government, which he is the Attorney General of, is going to abandon the litigation that is forcing 29 families to spend in excess of \$1 million litigating to get treatment for their kids with autism here in the province.

Indeed Ms Eberts, counsel amongst others for those 29 people, says that this government's position, the Liberal government's position, is, if anything, more heated up than it was under the Ernie Eves government. Thousands of young people in this province with autism, kids that people in our caucus know well, children of families that New Democrat Party caucus members know well, whether it's the Walsh family in Welland—they were here at Queen's Park with their boy, exposing this province as one that does not recognize the human rights of children like the Walsh boy, like young Conlan McKee, who turned six on November 24. His family has been notified by this government that because of Conlan reaching the age of six, he's going to be cut off his IBI treatment.

Oh, the family has options. The family could invest \$50,000 or \$55,000 a year in private sector treatment. I tell you, there are families, and we know them, who attempt to do that, and they manage to do it for a year or two. They sell off their house, take whatever equity they have in their homes and cash in all their RSPs, but then at some point they simply run out of money. This province and this new government have abandoned them as much as the previous government did for over eight years.

We have a Premier in this province who acknowledges that while there are but 500 children or so in programs receiving IBI treatment, there are another 1,000 kids on waiting lists, and there are a good 2,000 over the age of six who are going to be denied their right to a legitimate, valid treatment regime; the same Premier who before the election, he with his colleagues, some of them now ministers in his own cabinet, promised those same families that their children would be getting IBI treatment. Rather than keeping that promise, this government and this Attorney General, who stands up today and speaks somewhat pompously about human rights in Ontario, have ratcheted up the heat in the litigation that the 29 families of kids with IBI are being compelled to participate in. There are now over a hundred cases before the Ontario Human Rights Commission by families with children with autism, over a hundred cases of families seeking relief before the Ontario Human Rights Commission; families declaring that their children's human rights have been violated by this government.

1420

Does this government respond by supporting those children and acknowledging their right for treatment? No, this government challenges them and turns its back on those kids and their families. Oh, we can point the finger to so many places throughout the world, but we'd better reflect on what this government, these Liberals, are doing to young people here in this province.

## VISITORS

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask you to join me to welcome the law and politics students from St Theresa Secondary School in Belleville, and their parents and teachers. Many of these students come from Tweed, which is my home.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** To the Premier: I would like refresh his memory with a picture of himself and John Williamson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation on September 11 of this year. We need some memory-refreshing, I'm afraid, I say with all due respect, to—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. This is just the start of question period.

**Mr Eves:** This was on September 11 of this year, Mr Premier, some three short months ago. You and your new best friend of the day, John Williamson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, signed this pledge together saying that you would protect the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, that you would not raise taxes, that you would live up to your commitment to balance the books of the province. Are you going to live up to that commitment in this fiscal year, Mr Premier?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** We've been very straight from the outset with the people of Ontario. We have, for example, made it very clear that this year's budget under that government would not be balanced. We maintained that throughout the course of a provincial election. I can tell you that we stand by the report of Erik Peters, a man who served this province well for over 10 years as its Provincial Auditor, as a much more credible analyst of the information than, with all due respect, my good friend Mr Williamson.

**Mr Eves:** Premier, while you were in New York on Monday of this week, trying to ring the bell at the New York Stock Exchange, John Williamson was busy here ringing your bell with a reality check. You were embracing the Canadian Taxpayers Federation literally and figuratively on September 11 of this year and on September 23 of this year. Why would you not accept their interpretation of public accounts today, recognize that Mr Peters's opinion was just that, an opinion at that point in time, and recognize that the Ontario economy, as you told the people in New York on Monday, is performing very well and you will be able to balance the books of the province this year?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Again I say to the Leader of the Opposition that there's nothing wrong with the Ontario



economy. People of Ontario are working hard and are very entrepreneurial. The problem is the financial situation you've left in their government.

Again I say to the Leader of the Opposition that we stand by the report of Erik Peters. I understand that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has its own particular view on these matters, but its analysis lacks credibility because it has made a number of fundamental errors. I'll be pleased to describe those. The federation relies on unrealistic revenue projections. It includes transfers from the federal government that are unlikely to be realized this year.

We're not going to be playing accounting tricks. If we receive money next year, we're going to include it in next year's receipts.

**Mr Eves:** Mr Williamson is quoted as saying, "The Liberal government has overplayed its hand. The Liberals are making the province's fiscal situation appear worse than it actually is."

The reality is that there is going to be, by the end of this fiscal year, an additional \$3 billion in revenue that Mr Peters did not account for. There is going to be—

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** He was wrong, Ernie; he was just wrong.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I was just trying to help out.

**The Speaker:** You're not helping me at all. You're not helping the House. I would like to hear the leader of the official opposition and his final supplementary.

**Mr Eves:** There is going to be an additional \$771 million made available to you by your good friend Mr Manley in this fiscal year. Even Mr Manley himself has indicated that under the PSAB system of accounting—which every single government in this country adopts, except for yours, apparently—you have to bring that money in—not "may," but "have to"—in this fiscal year. You can balance the books if you want to, so will you roll up your sleeves and, instead of washing your hands of responsibility, actually go to work and balance the books for the taxpayers in this province?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I want to assure the Leader of the Opposition—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Maybe we should suspend question period. No one wants to listen; no one wants to give questions.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition, but more important, I want to reassure the people of Ontario that we will not be playing tricks with the government's accounting. We will record the money upon its receipt, and not before then.

I also want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we have been doing much to clean up the mess they left the people of Ontario. We have rolled back the latest portion of the tax giveaway to large corporations. We have eliminated the seniors' education property tax credit. We have eliminated the tax giveaway to private schools. We're beginning to raise the tobacco tax to the national average. We are getting to work, we are rolling

up our sleeves and we are doing everything we can in a responsible way to clean up the mess left to us by the Leader of the Opposition.

## TAXATION

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Premier, today in the members' gallery we have senior citizens of this province, we have parents and students who belong to independent schools, we have tobacco farmers, we have taxpayers. They are concerned that your government has embarked down a road of retroactively raising taxes, taking away somebody's legally entitled-to rights, and you're doing it retroactively. Would you not agree that this is bad public policy and one that this government or any other government should not be following?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue. I can tell you that we on this side of the House have an abiding confidence in the wisdom of the people of Ontario.

Moments after the Leader of the Opposition, as part of the previous government, introduced a budget some two years ago that contained this provision, which this party had never ran on, moments after that provision was introduced, I stood up and said no. We've been clear for over two years in our party that we do not support that measure. We brought that to the people of Ontario in the election, and they said no to that provision.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I'm going to start naming members who have been warned about interrupting question period. I'm sure the supplementary coming from the official opposition leader will be something they would like to hear and all of you would like to hear.

**Mr Eves:** My supplementary is to the Premier again. On September 11 of this year, you made quite a little photo op of Dalton McGuinty keeping taxes down, balancing your budget for a bright future. Very simply—  
1430

**The Speaker:** This is about the second time the Leader of the Official Opposition has shown these posters. I'm going to warn him that the next time I may have to name him. Would you finish, please.

**Mr Eves:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I can assure you I have no more photos to introduce into evidence.

Mr Premier, you signed this pledge. You said that you would not raise taxes on working families in the province of Ontario. You have a finance minister who doesn't seem to think that cancelling a legally entitled-to, by law, tax credit that is raising someone's taxes. Can you explain to these people in the gallery today, to Frank and Olive Russell, who now will have to pay the property taxes that they were legally entitled to a credit for; to fathers and mothers of young people who go to independent schools who had counted on and budgeted on an

equity in education tax credit this year; to tobacco farmers in the province of Ontario, can you explain to them how making them pay more is not raising their taxes?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Again I say, we ran on this. We made a very clear choice. We have ambitious plans for public education in the province of Ontario and we will not apologize for that. We have too many children going to school in crowded classrooms. We have schools that are crumbling around their feet. We have teachers who don't have the morale that they really should have in order to get the job done. We have great plans for public education. That is our priority. We ran on that in the last election. The people of Ontario said yes to public education. We continue to pursue our commitments in that regard and we continue to say to the Leader of the Opposition, who at one point in time called his own plan ludicrous, that we do not adopt or support that plan.

#### TOBACCO INDUSTRY

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** Today being Taxpayers' Day, there are many people in the galleries today to express their disappointment at the series of Liberal tax hikes we find in Bill 2. Many tobacco farmers are here today, and are coming to a mass meeting Friday evening in Tillsonburg. They are concerned about your tobacco tax hikes that will put them out of business. I joined tobacco farmers from my riding in the galleries here today in looking forward to a delivery of the promise of compensation that was made by your party during the election. These farmers were promised reparations to help buffer the impact of your tobacco tax hike, the impact it will have on them as families. These farmers will be expecting that at least this promise will be upheld. Premier, you announced tobacco tax hikes. Will you now announce farmer compensation?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I refer the matter to the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** I'm very happy to address this issue, and with the tobacco farmers that are here as well. I look forward to meeting with you on Friday night, and I hope the honourable member is there Friday night too. I hope the honourable member is going to do the honourable thing and stand behind the tobacco board. By going outside the tobacco board, and undermining the board, you're not helping the interests of these individuals over here. We need to do everything we can. We need to come to the federal round table. The federal round table is extremely important. That's going to be our opportunity. This is an industry that's at a crossroad right now. Our transition fund that we campaigned on is going to be part of what we bring to the round table, because we need to ensure that we have one plan for the tobacco industry. I hope that you're going to support that round table that meets on December 15 and 16, and stand behind the tobacco board and not undermine the tobacco industry.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is to the Premier. During the election campaign, you promised to bring real and meaningful public input into bills. Yesterday, the standing committee on finance heard from the Canadian Jewish Congress; we heard from the B'Nai Brith; we heard from the Muslim community; we heard from representatives of Christian schools in Ontario and thousands of families and children that all of these groups represent. They were unanimous. They didn't just disagree with your government's decision to scrap the equity in education tax credit; what they felt was that the decision to make that retroactive was wrong.

Premier, will you listen to the groups that came forward and provided input at the committee? Will you listen to the hundreds and thousands of families and children they affect? Will you do the right thing and end the retroactive nature of this tax grab?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Again, I don't want to diminish the importance of the issue, but we had a very important consultation process that took part by way of the election. We listened to the people of Ontario. They were very, very clear in regard to this matter, and I know my friend opposite understands this. We've been forthright about this issue from the get-go. We made it perfectly clear that we are choosing public education. The member opposite talks about a provision that was described by his leader as "ludicrous," a provision that would send over \$3 million to Upper Canada College. We choose instead to invest in public education.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, I don't think anyone campaigned in the last election campaign on making this tax grab retroactive. What do I tell a family in Metcalfe, Ontario, with two kids at the Christian school in Metcalfe, this family with an income of less than \$50,000 who made financial decisions based on what the statute books of the province said?

Premier, some people are calling this decision unprecedented; others are calling it mean-spirited and vindictive. Premier, you're retroactively raising corporate taxes; you're retroactively raising income taxes. Will you stand in your place and do the right thing and listen to the hundreds of families this decision is going to affect, whether they be Muslims, whether they be Jews or whether they be Christians or others who send their children to independent schools, and end once and for all the retroactive nature of this tax grab?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** For us, this is an important matter of principle. We support public education in Ontario. It's not particularly complicated. We think that public education at its very best—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. I would ask the member from Whitby-Ajax to control himself in a way that we can have question period. Thank you.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** We believe that public education at its very best can and should be the foundation for



social cohesion. We want a magnificent public education system. We want it to be attractive to all our parents, to all our children, and we will continue to allow that ideal to inspire our efforts and inform our thinking. Again I say, we choose public education over funding for private schools.

#### PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and let me congratulate the minister on his appointment.

During the recent election campaign, it was suggested that a vote for Liberals would cancel the funding for the new Peterborough Regional Health Centre. Can the minister assure the people of Peterborough riding that funding will flow for the construction of this new hospital?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'd like to thank the member from Peterborough for his question and for the good work he's doing on behalf of his community. In fact, his community has done a good job on their own, raising the necessary funds to support a long overdue hospital in that community. I'm happy to say today to the member from Peterborough and to all members of this House, and especially to the people from Peterborough, that Peterborough Regional Health Centre will proceed as planned.

1440

**Mr Leal:** We thank the minister for his assurances. The people within my riding are anxiously awaiting the construction of the new Peterborough Regional Health Centre. Now that we've been assured that the hospital will go ahead, can the honourable Minister of Health and Long-Term Care tell us if the hospital will be completed in 2007?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I can confirm that the hospital will be built on time, as planned, in 2007. I'd urge the honourable member to play the important role in his local community of helping to make sure that costs are contained so the project is completed on budget as well. But in 2007 the residents of Peterborough will have the benefit of a new hospital facility, a new public hospital in the province of Ontario to meet their future health care needs.

#### PREMIER'S VISIT TO NEW YORK CITY

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I have a question to the Premier. In an article entitled, "McGuinty says NYSE Snubbed Him for China," you told the Ontario media the following: "I had been lined up to give the honour of ringing the bell, but I was displaced when the Premier of China showed up with a 18-car cortège and pre-empted me." Premier, were you telling the truth?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. Would you withdraw the comment.

**Mr Hudak:** I withdraw and ask the Premier if his comments were fully accurate.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I was honoured to visit New York City on behalf of the people of Ontario and to express to the financial community there the strength of our economy, some of the challenges that we face as a government, how we are going to be tackling those head-on, how we have already introduced legislation which addresses some of the revenue side, how we intend to consult the people of Ontario with respect to the difficult steps we're going to be taking early on in the new year that will form the basis for our first budget.

Let me just say to the member opposite—and I know that the Leader of the Opposition has some familiarity with this—yesterday, quite frankly, I attempted to use a little bit of self-deprecating humour within the confines of a scrum and it was blown out of proportion.

Let me just confirm this, if I might.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** I know exactly how you feel.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** You know how I feel, eh?

I was treated with the utmost respect, accorded warm and gracious hospitality by the folks at the New York Stock Exchange and everybody else I encountered. I look forward to returning, whether or not I get to ring the damn bell.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary.

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate the Premier's answer and claim that he was misunderstood. I want to give him the opportunity to do the right thing. Later in that article it said, "A McGuinty aide later conceded Mr McGuinty knew ahead of time he would not be the one to yank the exchange bell."

Premier, I would think a good way to develop a strong trading relationship with the Americans is to develop that relationship on honesty and truth-telling. I understand that the Consul General—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Let me hear the member for Erie-Lincoln. I think he was coming to a very—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. The member from Erie-Lincoln.

**Mr Hudak:** I think members know the importance of the trading relationship that goes throughout the province, including the representation from the people of Niagara. We contacted the New York Stock Exchange, who informed us that the Canadian Consul General has sent an e-mail apologizing for the embarrassment that this has caused.

Mr Premier, will you do the right thing and apologize to the NYSE, and make it clear that your comments were not meant the way they were construed in the media?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I can understand why the members opposite don't want to talk about the Epp report, why they don't want to talk about the \$5.6-billion deficit, why they don't want to talk about the recent auditor's

reports. But let me just say once again how proud I was to visit New York City, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to reassure our American cousins that we have a strong and abiding economic relationship, that we look forward to building ever stronger economic ties, that we've got a government here that is rolling up its sleeves and getting down to work.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. During the recent election campaign, our party acknowledged the importance of building a more innovative economy. Cluster development has been identified as a way to spur economic growth. This was recently acknowledged by the Roger Martin Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. One of the many important clusters in the province is certainly the automotive sector. Minister, can you provide us with an update on the auto sector and initiatives being undertaken in your ministry to promote the development of this cluster?

**Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade):** It's an important question, because the Roger Martin task force did single out clusters in our economy as being an important element. In fact, what he pointed to was the strength of these clusters and how many we actually have in Ontario, which would lead to greater economic growth in the future. Innovation is the key. In fact, our government is taking initiatives to help companies innovate by focusing on research and development. By focusing on strategic skills development, we can make certain that these clusters lead the way in terms of economic growth.

The auto sector—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Supplementary.

**Hon Mr Cordiano:** I would just add, with respect to the other part of the member's question regarding the auto sector, that the auto sector is in fact one of the most important clusters in Ontario.

**The Speaker:** Any supplementary? Thank you.

**Hon Mr Cordiano:** Our government has taken initiatives with respect to the auto sector. The Canadian Automotive Partnership Council was an important forum which I attended—

**The Speaker:** Order. Supplementary.

**Ms Broten:** In my riding, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the Lakeshore community partnership, formerly named the South Etobicoke regeneration project, has undertaken a significant amount of leading-edge work to identify cluster development opportunities in our community. They have identified major emerging clusters in the media, automotive and food service industries, and these represent important growth and economic development opportunities for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. How will your ministry support the development of clusters in communities such as the one I represent?

**Hon Mr Cordiano:** Let me tell you how important the auto sector is to Ontario's economy. One out of six jobs is dependent on the auto sector, and it would be important for members to pay attention to this. In fact, with respect to the other clusters, we are taking initiatives to support those clusters: key investments in strategic skills development; working with our post-secondary institutions to fund research projects like MaRS, like the biotech industry. We are doing all of those things because we will build a technology corridor in Ontario which I think can lead the world.

Innovation is the key to economic growth. We will do the right things in this government by investing in those key sectors and investing in innovation, making our economy grow in the future.

1450

## SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** My question is again for the Premier. I'm going to give the Premier an opportunity to reflect on the response he gave me yesterday, when he refused to even suggest to his member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge or to his Minister of Finance that they repay the \$135,000 worth of severance that the former mayor of Pickering got from the taxpayers of Ontario and that Mr Sorbara, now the Minister of Finance, received from the taxpayers of Ontario.

You were so clear a year ago, in May 2002. Your now-Minister of Health spoke on behalf of the Liberal Party at that time. He even went so far, for many days, as to accuse Mr Eves of a lot of nasty things. He said Mr Eves was in a trough, that he was never in, and feeding at that trough; that what was good for the goose was good for the gander; and that the rule you would uphold is that severances had to be repaid when you got another government job after leaving a government job.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question?

**Mr Wilson:** Mr Eves did the honourable thing and repaid \$78,000 worth of severance. Why won't you bring some integrity to your government and require you—

**The Speaker:** Premier?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I can appreciate the member opposite's usual vigour and enthusiasm which he brings to his responsibilities there. He can ask the question as many times as he likes, but I'm not going to change my answer. I support the Minister of Finance; I support the other member to whom he makes reference—

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** Morley Kells.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:**—and who happens to have done something along the lines of a former member on the other side, Mr Kells.

There's an important distinction, as I said yesterday, to be drawn between these cases and the case of the Leader of the Opposition. He returned to public office very shortly after leaving. Mr Sorbara returned some six years



later. That's an important distinction. The Leader of the Opposition was in breach of the broader public service rules; Mr Sorbara was not. And therein lies the difference.

**Mr Wilson:** Part of your refusal to do the right thing, I gather, is, as you said yesterday, "My members have followed the rules."

Jamie Wallace of Osprey News pointed out on December 8, and I think he speaks volumes for how the people of Ontario feel about this: "When the Liberals damned Eves, even though he was entitled to compensation under the Legislature's rules, they changed the rules themselves."

Secondly, I think Christina Blizzard, in one of her excellent columns in the *Toronto Sun* on November 9—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Wilson:** —they're always excellent except when she's rating me—pointed out: "After all a severance package is something you give to an employee who faces unemployment. Surely if you choose to move to another level of government and you are successful in that bid, you shouldn't qualify for the severance."

Those statements speak volumes about how the taxpayers feel. They speak about integrity, which you could acquire if you gave the right answer to this question for your government. You're retroactively raising taxes; you're fleecing the taxpayers; you're taking money away from senior citizens. This is an opportunity to do the right thing, once and for all. Get up and do the right thing.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I lack the audacity to question the writings of Ms Blizzard or Mr Wallace, but I can question the member opposite. Again, I simply do not agree with him. I am convinced that if the people of Ontario were to have this matter brought to their general attention, they would agree that there's an important distinction to be drawn between the situations on this side of the House and those on that side of the House.

At the end of the day, the Leader of the Opposition recognized that what he did was inappropriate. He did the right thing, I say to him. The members here, under consideration, are doing the right thing at present. There is not need for them to do anything else.

## AUTISM SERVICES

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a question to the Premier. The former government discriminated against autistic children by cutting them off IBI treatment when they turned six. During the election you wrote to Nancy Morrison, whose son Sean is autistic, and you said, "I believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over age six is unfair and discriminatory." The election is over, and now your government is in court defending ongoing discrimination against autistic children. You're now fighting 29 Ontario families more aggressively than ever before.

Premier, you made a specific promise to families with autistic children, so why are you continuing to fight these

families and children in court, defending a policy which is unfair and discriminatory?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member opposite for her question. I know she has a genuine, long-standing and very sincere commitment to that issue, and I congratulate her for that.

Let me just say that we do have a responsibility to help families into which are born children afflicted by autism. We are going to be working with those families to address some of the issues they have to grapple with day in and day out. We're going to have to look for some innovative solutions.

With respect to the matter before the courts, there is something broader here at stake. The fact of the matter is that what the parents are asking the courts to do is to force the government to make certain kinds of expenditures. This has far-reaching effects beyond this particular issue.

Again, I say to the member, we understand the difficulties faced by these families, we look forward to sitting down with these families, we look forward to tackling the greater issue of human resources as well, because there's a shortage of skilled people. We're going to do everything we can to help these families.

**Ms Martel:** I say to the Premier, there's no need to sit down and chat with these families. You need to keep your election promise; that's what you need to do.

You see, Premier, in that same letter to Nancy Morrison you also said, "The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." It's time for you to keep your word, because autistic children who need medically necessary IBI treatment shouldn't have to go to court to get it, they shouldn't languish on waiting lists, hoping to receive it, and their families shouldn't face financial ruin trying to pay for it when you refuse to fund it. Premier, drop the court case now. Fund IBI for every autistic child who needs it. Will you keep your word today?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I know the member knows that there's also a waiting list for those children who are under the age of six years. What we've got to do is take the time to properly address this issue, including to better manage our human resources. The member opposite knows that we simply don't have enough people right now with the skills to help those children under six, let alone those over the age of six.

I do not want this member to underestimate our commitment to help out those families into which are born children suffering from autism. I'm simply asking her to give us a bit of time.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** Speaker, my question is also to the Premier.

**The Speaker:** It is with the government now.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect, it is not for the Chair to tell people when their turn is in question period. The

Chair's job is to recognize people who stand, and if somebody fails to stand, it's too bad, so sad.

**The Speaker:** That's not a point of order. As a matter of fact, it is a rotation. I turned this way and I saw—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. If I caused any confusion for the member for Oak Ridges, I'm sorry, but the question is now with the member for Sarnia.

1500

## PROPERTY TAXATION

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, in 1999 a new property assessment system was set up. I have had hundreds of letters, e-mails and phone calls regarding continual increases in residential property assessment, some as high as 70%. These increases are out of whack with the real estate market in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton. Thanks to the Tory legacy, staffing in our local assessment office has gone from 35 to three in recent years, and now that office has little ability to respond to the concerns of the citizens. The horror stories of this reality abound. What is our government going to do to address the problem we are seeing in property assessment, which is unfairly impacting thousands of homeowners in this province?

*Interjections.*

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** Some of my colleagues on this side of the House are saying "good question." I agree with that because each of them, each of us and everyone in this House has heard, I think, from hundreds of constituents, now that property assessment notices are coming out from MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation. I share her concern. In fact, there are some very serious problems in her riding of Sarnia-Lambton where, as it appears from the correspondence that I get, assessments do not seem to be consistent with actual valuations by way of resales. All I can tell her at this point is that we are taking a very serious look. The Premier described this system once as a spare tire with 11 patches on it. I can assure my friend that there is some work to do here on the property tax assessment system.

**Ms Di Cocco:** It's reassuring that we're going to look at it. I have to say that from evidence, both from my constituents and front-line workers, it appears that there's a systemic problem with the way MPAC is handling assessments. Increases in assessments are often questionable, and we are seeing record numbers of requests for reconsiderations across the province. As you know, Minister, many individuals are struggling with the tax implications of this assessment process that's now perceived as dysfunctional by many of my constituents. How are we going to deal with this growing problem of property assessment in Ontario?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I wish I had a comprehensive plan for her today. I can tell you that we consider this a very serious problem. I don't want to go back into the history

of the seven bills and dozens of amendments that led to the current patchwork of our property tax system. What I can say to my friends in the House and to the member from Sarnia is that her clarion call for some attention here is not going to be unheard.

I do, however, want to assure property taxpayers that a rise in the assessment value that they are receiving now does not necessarily mean a property tax increase. I don't want to explain the complexities of the system, but just simply assure her and property taxpayers that we are looking after this matter.

## CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier. I'm going to follow up on the same theme as the member for Nickel Belt: the theme of broken promises—although I must say, Premier, that you haven't broken this one yet. You and your Minister of Energy are on the brink.

On page 7 of your election platform, you stated very clearly, "We will give more independence and power to legislative committees." Those committees have now started their work. The committee on justice and social policy is hearing from representatives of stakeholders on Bill 4. They have made a number of recommendations for amendments to that bill. We were told this morning in committee that your Minister of Finance charged the parliamentary assistant not to bring forward one amendment to that legislation.

Will you take the shackles off the members of that committee and direct them to be empowered, listen to stakeholders, and take on those very straightforward and helpful amendments to improve this legislation?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I believe the Minister of Energy wants to speak to this.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** Earlier in question period the member for Nepean-Carleton talked about all the groups that came to committee to give their views against government policy. Coming from that side, talking about committees, a government that routinely sent budget bills without committee, passed them with time allocation without an opportunity to place amendments at all, it's just a little bit passing strange. Let me say this: Number one, the first three major bills of this government are getting committee hearings; number two, there are delegations being heard, which didn't happen very often under your government; number three, there's clause-by-clause on these bills. This never happened in an amount of time that was agreed to by the opposition, with rules that were agreed to by the opposition, rules that you, sir, voted in favour of, going into these committees.

**Mr Klees:** With all respect—three hours of hearings, six representations from stakeholders—the minister has not answered the question. Your election promise, which you're on the brink of breaking now, this afternoon—the Premier will once again be accused of breaking one more



promise—has to do with empowering legislative committees. You, Minister, have directed your parliamentary assistant not to bring forward one amendment and, I venture to say, and we'll see this afternoon, to vote down every amendment we put forward. We will see at the end of the afternoon whether or not you will have broken one more promise to the people of this province. If you do—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Klees:** —it will not be to the benefit of this House or to the integrity of your government.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** We turned down your amendments because you basically wanted to reinstate your policy, which was a grotesque failure and has cost the people of this province \$800 million. That's number one. Number two, I note you didn't note the groups that came in support of the government's bill and said to pass the bill as it is, because unlike the members opposite—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** One second. Member for Nepean-Carleton, you've done enough damage already for the day. You've broken a mike and you are breaking the sequence of question period. Could I hear the House leader?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** To summarize, you neglected to talk about the groups that came to committee and said, "Listen, pass this bill." The policy of the previous government was a bad policy. It cost the public \$800 million. It was a policy that couldn't possibly have worked. It didn't encourage conservation. It didn't encourage future growth of energy supply in this province. My parliamentary assistant has done an excellent job in piloting through government legislation at committee and deserves credit for taking the lead in ensuring that we do away with a policy brought about by your government that could have destroyed energy in this province for years to come.

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: in accordance with the standing rules of this House, the House is empowered to conduct business through standing committees. The minister opposite just said that he has rejected the amendments of a committee meeting that has not yet met. I want to stress that this matter should be examined. The minister has suggested that he and his government and his committee members have rejected amendments that have yet to be placed before the committee. I would like the Speaker to examine this issue. What is the purpose of having standing committees and what is the purpose of having public hearings if in fact we are not allowed to even table our amendments?

**The Speaker:** I did not hear the member state that.

**Mr Jackson:** Well, he said it.

**The Speaker:** Order. I did not hear the member state that. If, on checking, that is the case, I'll let you know.

Where was I now? New question, the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Before that, let me just take this point of order from the member from Oak Ridges.

**Mr Klees:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: it is on the same point of order my colleague raised earlier. What I'm concerned about is this is a very serious issue. It's being laughed off, and I want a commitment that, in fact, after you do check Hansard, this matter will be looked into with seriousness. There are implications—

**The Speaker:** Order. I hope that I made myself clear. I said I will look into the matter and then I'll get back to you on this.

1510

## PALLIATIVE CARE

**Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre):** I thought I may have a preamble to my question, which will be to the Minister of Health. I'd like to state first of all to my colleagues, yes, I scripted the question. Secondly, it's not softball. Thirdly, it's of utter importance to me personally and to my community. I am currently a palliative care worker and formerly a director of the Dorothy Ley Hospice, which is a palliative care centre for terminally ill people in Etobicoke.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has indicated, and it's much appreciated, his revolution of the issue of long-term care. Hospice palliative care is of equal importance, and my question to him is, how will he address this for not only my community but other communities in Ontario?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I think we all learn lessons all the time about the challenges of making sure people have the opportunity to live out their lives in complete dignity. Palliative care is a very essential piece of that, whether it's delivered in a hospital environment, in a long-term-care setting or in our homes.

We look for opportunities to expand palliative care, and I would be happy to report to members that yesterday we had the opportunity to fulfill the promise of the health accord of the national health council, and soon, with resources that are coming in part from the federal government, we'll have the opportunity to expand home care and particularly home care that addresses the member's concern. We look forward, in the term of our government, to be able to expand home care for individuals and to expand palliative home care as well, so that people can live out their final days with all of the dignity that our society can provide.

**Mrs Cansfield:** As the minister indicated, palliative care occurs at end of life. It's an important, critical part for families in terms of respite as well as end-of-life care.

*Interjection.*

**Mrs Cansfield:** It is, you know. Sorry, it's important to me, Mr Kormos.

One of the things that is happening currently is that when people go to hospitals they are charged a surcharge to die if they are in palliative care and it doesn't have a palliative care bed. That's wrong. We need to expedite palliative care in hospices across this province. I'd like

your assurance, Mr Minister, that that will occur as soon as possible.

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I wish that in my answer I could offer the member a date when we'd be able to remove that kind of injustice. What I can commit to her today and to all members of this House is that we take the issue of palliative care seriously. To be able to expand our capacities in palliative care is an important objective of our ministry and our government, and we will undertake to establish, through the term of our government, a much stronger capacity in our province to offer palliative care in whatever setting, in a way that reaffirms our commitment to give people living out their final days a greater dignity at that stage of their lives.

#### VIDEO CAMERAS IN POLICE VEHICLES

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, yesterday you announced that you will act to install video cameras in police cruisers as recommended in the racial profiling report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Please inform the House how much this program will cost the taxpayers, both as a pilot in this fiscal year and upon full implementation. How will it impact the so-called election promise to hire 1,000 new police officers across our province?

**Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services):** I thank the member for the question. I find it strange that you're asking me that question. You should be addressing that question to the former minister, because this was an initiative of your government. This is something that you initiated. I should tell you that, at the present time, this pilot project will provide cameras in OPP vehicles, 12 of them up in Kenora, 22 in the Toronto area and two for research and development. This has nothing to do with the commitment we have made to put 1,000 new police officers into the police services across Ontario during this mandate.

You should know that today Brian Adkin, the president of the OPPA, issued a press release saying that he supports this. He thinks this is great. You should also know that the RCMP have 400 video cameras, and they've had them for eight years. The military police in Canada have had them for three years. Peel, Durham, the Quebec Provincial Police are all looking at putting in video cameras.

**Mr Dunlop:** Minister, our caucus believes that the only reasons video cameras should ever be installed in police cruisers would be for the safety of police officers and for investigative purposes—we do agree with Mr Runciman on that—not as a Big Brother tactic for spying on our officers. Any other reason would show a complete lack of trust and discrimination against the very people who allow Ontarians to live in a safe, civil and secure society.

Minister, your announcement immediately following the recommendations of the commission clearly shows

that you want video cameras installed in police cruisers for discriminatory and spy tactic reasons. Do you trust the police officers of Ontario to do their jobs, or do you not trust the police officers to do their jobs?

**Hon Mr Kwinter:** I totally reject the assumptions you have made. I should quote from OPPA Brian Adkin's press release, in which he says, "OPPA supports cameras in police cruises to allow for monitoring the interaction between police and the public." That is the purpose. That was an initiative that we had in the works. The only reason why it came to light yesterday is because there was a recommendation in Commissioner Norton's report saying we should do it. All I was confirming is that we are doing it. There is no motivation other than that. This is an initiative that, as I said before, began in your administration. We are carrying it forward. It is a good police tool, and I can assure you that it will serve the people of Ontario well.

#### ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** This question comes from the constituents of Don Valley West, through my office, and it's for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's about the Ontario Municipal Board.

Among the issues of greatest concern during the election and since I was elected has been the quality of neighbourhoods in Don Valley West in light of proposed developments. Over the past two months I have received many concerned inquiries about at least four different proposed real estate developments. Each of the situations is different, but there are commonalities. The commonality is that in each case area residents are concerned that the quality and character of their neighbourhoods will be injured by these developments. In each case, they worry that the body that is supposed to review developments like these, the OMB, is little more than a rubber stamp for developers that won't take their situations into account. Mr Minister, how will the government's forthcoming OMB reforms provide for more democratic and community involvement?

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** I'd like to thank the member very much for her question. Our commitment to the people of Ontario in our platform document was to give them a real and meaningful voice in the decision-making and planning process. As you well know, the Ontario Municipal Board reform basically has two aspects to it: the Planning Act reforms and the reforms within the OMB itself.

1520

Before the end of this session, we hope to introduce legislation that in effect will deal with the Planning Act reforms: (1) We want to protect the public interest by preventing developers from forcing developments upon urban expansions. We do not want to see that happen. (2) We want to give the members of the public a much stronger voice in the planning decisions that affect their



communities by extending the time frames that are available for them to deal with development and to react to developments. Finally—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Supplementary?

**Ms Wynne:** I'm working with the councillors in my area, Cliff Jenkins and Jane Pitfield. It's really important that the councillors and the mayors across the province understand the changes that we're making. Can you tell me what the response is from the municipal elected officials across the province?

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** I can tell you that the AMO, which speaks on behalf of the municipalities of Ontario, is greatly in support of this. As a matter of fact, Ken Boshkoff, who until recently was the president of the association, said, "Giving councils the due credit to make decisions for their communities is an important step in recognizing municipalities as a responsible and an accountable order of government, elected by their constituents to look after their municipality."

We want to ensure that the provincial planning policies are being adhered to. One way to do that is to change the terminology in the act so that decisions that are made are consistent with, rather than simply having regard to, the provincial policies. That will make a big difference to the people of Ontario and will greatly improve our planning process and the ability of the individuals to be involved in that.

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** It's the end of question period.

In the government members' gallery is a former member, René Fontaine, also former minister from Cochrane North and former Minister of Northern Development. Welcome.

#### PETITIONS

##### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm proud to read a petition that says, "Ontarians Deserve Choice in Education." It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government respected the right of parents to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government passed a law providing parents with a tax credit of up to 50% of tuition to a maximum of \$3,500 once fully implemented; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now introduced a bill that will cancel this important credit that provides working-class parents with the ability to send their children to a school of their choice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To protect the equity in education tax credit and stop the Liberal tax hike bill from becoming law."

I sign my signature in support

#### TUITION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Increases in tuition fees cause a real hardship for students at all levels. That's why the Canadian Federation of Students is continuing to send petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I have this petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I'm in real favour of this petition, I'm delighted to put my signature to it.

#### TOBACCO TAX

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's my distinct pleasure to read a petition on behalf of the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, forcing store owners to hide cigarette and tobacco displays behind a curtain, and make a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas history has proven that increases in tobacco taxes cause increases in the smuggling trade for illegal black-market tobacco whose contents are neither regulated nor inspected; and

"Whereas forcing store owners to hide their tobacco displays unduly punishes both store owners and consumers for the purchase and marketing of what remains a legal product;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject the increase in tobacco taxes and the ban on the display of tobacco products, and protect the rights of consumers to purchase a legal, regulated product—tobacco."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Mr Toby Barrett.

#### ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I'm presenting this petition on behalf of thousands of people from the adoption community in Ontario. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 14, regarding the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act, has been introduced between 1998 and 2003; and

"Whereas one of the aforementioned bills received committee hearings in November 2001; and

"Whereas Bill 14 addresses privacy concerns for those who wish to avoid or delay contact; and

"Whereas adoptees are dying from genetic diseases in the absence of their family medical history; and

"Whereas birth mothers were never promised confidentiality;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately call Bill 14, the Adoption Disclosure Statute Law Amendment Act, for second reading, third reading and final vote."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas many Ontario families choose to send their children to alternative schools; and

"Whereas the United Nations has condemned Ontario for funding Catholic schools and not alternative schools of other denominations and religions as discriminatory; and

"Whereas many Ontario families have made their children's educational plans on the basis of the educational tax credit that is a legal and existing law in Ontario and its retroactive abolishment by the Liberal government will result in considerable hardship;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government of Ontario support Ontario working families by maintaining the Ontario educational tax credit for alternative schools and rejecting any proposal to reverse this tax relief."

#### TUITION

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I have a petition:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and"—

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Doubled?

**Mr Brown:** Doubled.

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"(2) Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

#### LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas this government promised to help needy students with tuition waivers; and

"Whereas your government promised to create a rapid re-employment and training project; and

"Whereas your government promised to create an employee training tax credit;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the provincial government to stop playing politics and campaigning for the next election and start working for the taxpayers of this great province. Please keep at least some of your promises to the people of Ontario."

I'll sign that as well.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** As I promised to my constituents, I stand in my place today to represent the good citizens of the former town of Dundas, some of whom are here today, who are petitioning the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Whereas in a democratic society, governments are elected to represent the wishes of their electors; and

"Whereas more than 95% of the citizens of the town of Dundas who cast ballots in the citizens' referendum of February 8, 1997, expressly opposed amalgamation with the city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas the council of town of Dundas voted in opposition to amalgamation within this city of Hamilton, and the council of the region of Hamilton-Wentworth voted to eliminate regional government and return its responsibilities to local municipal councils; and

"Whereas the corporation of the town of Dundas received its municipal charter in 1847 and served its citizens well throughout its proud history; and



"Whereas the corporation of the town of Dundas was being run efficiently, effectively and in a fiscally responsible manner; and

"Whereas the province, through the City Of Hamilton Act, 1999, revoked the charter of the town of Dundas and forced its amalgamation with the municipalities of Ancaster, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Hamilton and Stoney Creek; and

"Whereas the promised improvements in the provision of services, increases in government accessibility and accountability, and lowering of overall costs and taxes have not materialized under the new amalgamated municipal structure;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the most appropriate and expedient action necessary to cause to be held a binding referendum, allowing the citizens of the former town of Dundas, currently ward 13 of the city of Hamilton, to vote on de-amalgamating from the city of Hamilton."

I have 2,600 signatures from the people of Dundas, representing about 16% of the voters there to join the other petitions from Flamborough and the great town of Ancaster.

1530

#### SENIORS' PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** "To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas many Ontario seniors, both homeowners and tenants, are counting on their rebate pursuant to the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act; and

"Whereas the Liberal government's plan to scrap the tax credit will cause a hardship on many of Ontario's most vulnerable senior citizens; and

"Whereas this tax relief would help Ontario seniors remain in their own apartments and homes and assist them in meeting rising costs;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government of Ontario support Ontario seniors and help them remain in their own homes by maintaining the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act and rejecting any proposal to reverse this tax relief."

#### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I do have another petition concerning the city of Toronto school board.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Hughes Public School at 17 Innes Avenue in the city of Toronto closed down, and its premises have been declared surplus by the Toronto District School Board;

"Whereas the city of Toronto has issued a building permit to the Toronto District School Board permitting the reconstruction of Hughes Public School for an entity

called Beatrice House, for the purpose of a private academic school;

"Whereas the Beatrice House is not a private school registered with the Ministry of Education, nor a mident has been issued to that organization;

"Whereas within the context of the zoning bylaw (438-86), the subject lands have been designated as R2 Z0.6 and permit a 'private academic, philanthropic or religious school';

"Whereas the TDSB has chosen not to lease the subject premises to a computer training company for \$1.25 million annually. Instead, the board has chosen to lease it to the Beatrice House for a fraction of the current market value;

"Whereas a lease has not been signed between the TDSB and Beatrice House, while renovations to the building are underway;

"Whereas local taxpayers' concerns have been ignored by the TDSB;

"Whereas other locations, such as the Brother Edmund Rice School at 55 Pelham Park, or the Earls court Public School at 29 Ascot, which are being closed down, have been offered to Beatrice House to no avail;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Honourable Minister of Education investigate the leasing arrangement between the Toronto District School Board and Beatrice House inasmuch as:

"(1) Boards are to seek fair market value when selling, leasing or otherwise disposing of schools except that the price for the property not to exceed the value of the ministry's grant for the new pupil places when the purchaser is a coterminus board, a provincial school, or a publicly funded care and treatment facility offering programs leading to a diploma.

"(2) Boards are to offer the property to coterminus boards and other public agencies operating in the area in accordance with the priority order currently specified in regulation 444/98.

"(3) The Toronto District School Board has not dealt in good faith with our neighbourhood residents.

"Therefore, we respectfully ask" the Minister of Education "to consider our plea for justice. The Toronto District School Board has ignored our concerns and due diligence. We as a community tried everything within our power to fight the glaring and obvious wrong done to us, to no avail."

This is the petition and I am willing and happy to present it to you.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit seeks to restore equity and parental choice to Ontario's education system;

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit allows those from lower-income homes to have the same opportunities as other students;

"Whereas families who choose to send their children to independent schools have to pay twice for their children's education;

"Whereas the majority of families who benefit from the tax credit come from lower or middle-class homes;

"Whereas the United Nations has called on the government of Ontario to remedy the inequity in the education system;

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has been inconsistent on his stance on the equity in education tax credit;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised the people of Ontario that he would not raise our taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow the equity in education tax credit to continue to be the law of the land in Ontario, and allow lower- and middle-income parents the privilege to send their children to independent schools if they so choose, and to vote against Bill 2, which would repeal the equity in education tax credit."

I affix my name.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wish to advise the House of the business for tomorrow.

In the afternoon there will be debate on the throne speech. It begins with speeches from the mover and seconder.

In the evening we will be debating third reading of Bill 4.

## OPPOSITION DAY

### TAXATION

### IMPOSITION

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On another point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask unanimous consent for the NDP members to be provided with up to 15% of the debating time to participate in the opposition day, notwithstanding standing order 42(f).

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed. So be it.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to record that I am supporting this unanimous consent today, but New Democrats don't support, once we reach an agreement, just getting 15% of the debate time. I just want to make sure that's on the record, that we think the New

Democratic caucus has a unique position on some of these issues and needs more time to debate them.

**The Speaker:** Do you agree with the unanimous consent to have 15%? OK.

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** I move that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To recognize that the government has imposed retroactive tax increases on the people of Ontario which is bad public policy and to recognize that the government is increasing the tax burden on low- and middle-income earners while at the same time breaking several of the more than 230 promises made during the 2003 general election campaign,

To honour their promise to the people of Ontario from page 13 of the Liberal platform document, Government That Works For You: The Liberal Plan for a More Democratic Ontario, and "comply with the Taxpayer Protection Act and balanced budget legislation (and) not bend the law at whim," and

That the Liberal government not pass Bill 2 until it has obtained the express permission of the people of Ontario by way of a referendum as required by the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, and in accordance with the taxpayer protection pledge from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation signed by Mr. McGuinty, Premier of Ontario.

1540

**Mr Eves:** The motion before the House asks the government to do two very simple things. First, it asks the government to keep its own promises to the people of the province of Ontario. Second, it asks the government to do what the government expects Ontario citizens to do every day, and that is simply to obey the law of the province. I would expect this motion would then enjoy the full support of all members of this House, including Liberal members, who I know will want to keep their promises and obey the law of the province.

Let me explain to my colleagues, especially my Liberal colleagues, why they should be anxious to support this resolution. In the first instance, the Liberal Party promised the people of Ontario that they would not raise taxes, and that if elected they would comply with the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, and balanced budget legislation, not some amended or watered down version of the act. That specific act was the pledge Dalton McGuinty, their leader, signed.

As I'm sure you will recall, Mr Speaker, it was on September 11 of this year that the current Premier, with great fanfare and flourish, signed a pledge to abide by and respect the current taxpayer protection legislation and balanced budget law. I'm also sure you will recall, Mr Speaker, that the Premier's signature was witnessed by none other than John Williamson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. In that pledge to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and to the people of Ontario, the Premier stated he would not raise taxes or impose any new taxes without the express consent of Ontario voters. He also committed to balanced budgets and to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act as it exists today.



Our Liberal friends were positively giddy with delight when Mr Williamson and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation extolled their leader's conversion to taxpayer protection and the virtues of their fiscal and financial plan. They were so delighted by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation pronouncements that they issued a press release on September 23, summarizing the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's greatest clips and quotes. One quote made specific reference to the fact that the major reason the Canadian Taxpayers Federation was feeling comfortable with the Liberal Party was Dalton McGuinty's promise that he would "abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999."

Abiding by the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, requires that the government hold a referendum to obtain the consent of the people of Ontario before it raises taxes. I know the members opposite cling to the fiction that the election itself was a referendum on their tax plan. However, those informed in this matter would recognize that notice given to the Chief Election Officer was deficient in a number of respects. For example, the addendum to the notice did not come from the leader himself as is required by the law. The addendum was filed outside the disclosure time frame as set out by the act. Moreover, neither notice to the Clerk contained reference to the seniors' tax credit or the equity in education tax credit legislation.

I know the members opposite, led by the Premier and the finance minister, insist that the scrapping of tax credits does not constitute a tax hike. We had many people in the gallery today. We had senior citizens, we had parents and children who are supporters of independent schools, we had tobacco farmers, we had people from the agricultural community, and we had modest-income, hard-working, taxpaying Ontarians.

Let me quote the Liberal leader's former best friend, Mr John Williamson, on this matter. They may want to pay attention to this since it is quite instructive. On the issue of scrapping tax credits, Mr Williamson says tax credits "lower the tax bite, and if the finance minister turns around and takes away some of those credits, that means they pay more. If they pay more, that's a tax hike."

It is indeed so simple that, with all due respect, even a Liberal should be able to understand it. Very simply put, if you make people pay more money, if you change an act so that it requires them to pay more in taxes and you take away something from them, you are indeed raising their taxes. It is pretty simple stuff and a definition of a tax hike consistent with the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999. I keep reminding the Premier and those members on the government side of the House that it is that pledge, that act, that he committed himself to, not some former or future watered-down version of that act that's going to suit their own purposes. In fact, he expressly stated that he would not do that. He promised and pledged that he would not amend or water down or bend the act in any way.

There's no question everyone is going to pay more taxes or have less under this government. The list of victims to date includes senior citizens, who have worked so hard and have built this province. They have fought for this province in wartime; they have built this province in peacetime. They have paid more than their share of taxes for many decades. If we can assist them to stay in their own homes a little bit longer, whether they own or rent, surely we should do that, out of respect for them.

Independent school supporters, some of whom were in the gallery today, are individuals of modest means. They are not rich individuals, as the government would lead you to believe. They are parents who have made a choice for the education of their children, those young people. Surely, particularly today, when the Attorney General stood in his place and wanted to talk about an international day when everybody's rights are to be respected, isn't it rather ironic that this is the government that wants to discriminate against parents and young people who choose an independent education of whatever faith?

Tobacco farmers—we've heard from some of my colleagues today and we've heard from the tobacco farmers, indeed, themselves. We have the Minister of Agriculture and Food standing in his place today in the Legislature, virtually lecturing tobacco farmers, "Don't you dare disagree with me or this government or you will pay the price." I mean, if you did that out there, it would be called a threat. "This is a government that advocates open and transparent democracy as long as you agree with everything we stand for, and if you dare disagree, we are going to punish you, we are going to penalize you. You will pay the price."

Every single person who uses electricity in the province of Ontario is going to pay more. This is another pledge this government has already broken in its first few days of office. It's a government that insists it has to impose these tax hikes, and likely run a deficit this year, because of, they claim, a huge "inherited" Tory deficit, to quote their throne speech document. The size of that deficit tends to vary almost by the minute or the hour, let alone the day. It's a bit like they are playing deficit du jour over there at the Frost Building these days, wondering what number they should use today.

First the finance minister told us there was no doubt whatsoever that the deficit was \$5.6 billion. He knew it was \$5.6 billion, he said, because he asked the former Provincial Auditor, Mr Peters, to do a comprehensive review of the province's finances, and that was the exact, very definite number. Well, that would be fine if it were true, but the reality is that Mr Peters said that he was conducting a review; this was not a definite number. This was his opinion that, if the economy of the province of Ontario only grew at a 1.8% increase in GDP growth for the entire fiscal year that started last April 1 and runs through to next March 31, then the number could be as high as \$5.6 billion if the government did nothing to reduce spending, if they did nothing to save. And they said during their election campaign they had \$2 billion worth of savings identified, plus a \$1-billion surplus;

there's \$3 billion right there in 10 seconds. And yet we have the finance minister also commenting a few weeks ago that last year's numbers would indeed be in deficit. Then he had to hurriedly retract those remarks about 10 days later when he found out that the Provincial Auditor had indeed, in public accounts, found that there was a surplus last year, that the books were balanced and there was a positive side of the ledger.

1550

How can you believe anything the Minister of Finance says, because he changes the numbers and changes his mind literally every minute, if not every hour, of every day.

A few weeks later the gnome's finances were back in the press again. This time, with much hand-wringing and moaning, they were speculating that the deficit could be as high as \$8 billion this year and maybe even more. What could possibly account for such a large jump in the projected deficit of the province in a very short period of time? How could the esteemed former auditor, Erik Peters, have missed such a huge amount? How could he make such a gross error in his calculations? This was the same Erik Peters that they were lauding a few days before, of course.

Well, we do not yet know the full answer, and I presume that will come from the Minister of Finance when he does his economic update next week, which, I might point out, is only about a month late, as to when the normal update is done by the finance minister of the province. We do not know the full answer, but it seems the government has decided that it might be appropriate to add the operating deficits of all publicly funded institutions to the province's books and to the province's bottom line. You might want to ask the Minister of Finance if he's going to assume the responsibility for your Visa bill or your mortgage, because that might be appropriate to add to the bottom line of the province as well.

I can't believe that anybody who's been in this place as long as the Minister of Finance has was not aware that out of the hundreds of hospitals in this province, there are many that have operated at deficits for decades, going back to the 1970s, perhaps even before that. It's a known fact; it is not a "secret," as was quoted in a headline of the Toronto Star. It's only a secret for people that have been sleeping under a rock for the last 40 years, I suppose, that there indeed have always been hospitals operating deficits in this province. There are debentures that municipalities take out. Many of the members opposite pride themselves in their career in municipal politics. They didn't know that their community had a deficit; that they had a mortgage; that they had to debenture; that they owed money? Now what the finance minister is proposing is that anybody that owes anything should flow into this year's fiscal deficit for the province. How absolutely ridiculous. It's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard of, and you can only assume—the Minister of Finance is not that out of touch with reality.

He's not that dumb. He just wants to play politics with this issue.

The people of this province are fair-minded, but they are not naive and they are not stupid, and they will not fall for this. At the end of the day, this government will pay the price of lacking in credibility, responsibility and fairness to the people of Ontario.

It has become abundantly clear that the size of this deficit has very little to do with the financial position of the province, but it has very much to do with the political agenda, in a large-P political sense, of this government. The deficit number is being driven by the government's need for political cover as it covers up for (a) the proposed spending spree, and (b) it wants to demonize the former government and its record. It wants to avoid making the difficult decisions that are necessary to keep its promise to balance the budget. It is driven by the need to use the deficit as an excuse for shelving or delaying entirely a slew of campaign commitments and promises it always knew it could never deliver.

Alas for the government, this flim-flam has been exposed by none other than its good friends at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Yesterday, Mr McGuinty's—

**Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** Former.

**Mr Eves:**—former best friend, Mr Williamson, said that the Ontario deficit is absolutely nowhere near \$5.6 billion, never mind \$8 billion. It's their estimate. It could be about \$600 million if you spread Mr Manley's payment of \$771 million for health care over the next three years. If you don't, and if you adopt the PSAB accounting rules which every jurisdiction in this country abides by, and up until now the province of Ontario has abided by—then the books of the province would be balanced this year. But this government doesn't want to balance the books of the province, and they have set out on a political agenda to do exactly what they are doing, and that is trying to flim-flam the people of the province.

They said they had a plan to manage a \$2-billion deficit, so \$600 million should be a walk in the park. However, they don't want to accept any good news that detracts from the real agenda. They should admit and come clean with the people of Ontario that indeed we do live in the best province in the best country in the world. We are the heart of the economy of this great country of Canada, and one of the primary reasons why the Canadian economy is performing so well is right here in this province. The economy is performing well. They know it, and they should take it into account instead of posturing for political purposes.

There is no need for this government to rush to strip people, in some cases retroactively, of tax credits that they had literally been banking on. There is no need to push Bill 2 through this House. There is no fiscal emergency that justifies ignoring the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999. The government, which purports to be committed to revitalizing democracy in Ontario, should actually take the time to consult with the people of Ontario.



I say in all seriousness to the members opposite that if they are planning to keep any of the 230 campaign promises they made to the people of this great province, the two they should keep are to not increase taxes and to balance the books.

This government does not have a lot of experience in keeping promises. In its very short life we have seen some very interesting reversals indeed. One is, "Not one single home will be built on the Oak Ridges moraine." Well, not one single one is being built; 5,700 new homes are going to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine.

"We will leave the cap on hydro rates at 4.3 cents in place until 2006." How long did it take them to break that? Their argument for that is that it affects the deficit of the province, which it does not. One has absolutely nothing to do with the other. I would urge the members opposite to stop and think about what has gone on in this province with respect to Ontario Power Generation and its predecessor, Ontario Hydro. For decades the people of this province have not paid the true cost of producing power. That has gone on for decade after decade after decade, and they know it. Any deficit or debt incurred by Ontario Hydro is not on the books of the province of Ontario, nor should it be put on the books, this year or any other year, with all due respect. This is a shell game, and it's a shell game that is fraught, I think, with political consequences for this government down the road in four years' time—if, of course, they live up to that promise to have an election every four years.

They were going to have a public inquiry into meat inspection. What has happened to that? They were going to have a hard cap on class sizes of 20 students. What has happened to that? They were going to eliminate every coal-burning plant in province of Ontario by 2007. What has happened to that? You can't keep track of all the promises they break. There's almost a promise a day that goes by the wayside.

The very competitiveness of not just the Ontario but the Canadian economy relies upon the sustainability of public services and sound tax and financial policies provided by this government, the government of Ontario. The Premier wasn't shy about going to New York and talking to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce there on Monday about what a great province he lived in, how great the economy was going, how it made the difference to this great country of Canada, how we were great neighbours, how we both benefited from trade and everything is tickety-boo. That's what he said in New York on Monday. He comes back on Tuesday and, "Woe is me. I've got this huge mess, the province is in a mess, we're in the worst province in the country, not the best."

Does he believe that we have the best public education anywhere in the world right here in the province of Ontario—yes or no? Does he believe that we have the best health care system anywhere in the world right here in the province of Ontario—yes or no?

1600

Denigrating people who work in those two sectors doesn't do any of us any good, especially when it's done

for partisan and political purposes. There's nothing to say they can't be improved, but I'm standing here to tell you, as I've always said in my 23 years in this place, that we live in the best province in the best country in the world—not to say it can't be made better.

One of the reasons why this economy and why the Canadian economy is being so successful is because of the policies that our government put in place to allow people to keep more of their own money.

You can disagree with that policy. That's fair; it's a fair debate to have in a democratic society. But one thing I would urge the government members not to do, as a matter of public policy, is to retroactively institute a tax increase.

In all my years in this place, I cannot remember a time when any government of any political stripe in the province of Ontario has stooped to introduce a retroactive tax increase. I introduced several retroactive tax decreases, but I can't believe that a government, as a matter of public policy, would take away something that legally belongs to the people of the province of Ontario, to take away their money and do it retroactively.

We have modest-income families, who were in the gallery today, who have planned this. They've budgeted for this. They are not wealthy, as was pointed out by some of my colleagues today. Their household income is less than \$50,000 a year, and they have planned for their children to go to the independent Christian school of their choice. It'd be very mean-spirited of this government or any other to now retroactively come along after the fact and take that money away from those families. Where are they going to find this money?

And if they're going to raise taxation levels on tobacco tax that in effect puts tobacco farmers out of business, surely they owe it to those same people in the agricultural community to provide compensation for them so they can make ends meet and they can get on with their lives and perhaps some other form of agricultural endeavour.

There's a lot of planning that needs to go into a lot of the stuff that the government is trying to hurriedly put through in Bill 2, and I would really urge the members on all sides of this House to think twice before they do some of the things that they're purporting to do in this significant piece of legislation.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Quite frankly, I was surprised, given all the issues that the opposition party's identified, that they went with one that was obviously so related to the media.

As I was growing up, I've always heard the expression, "More nerve than a canal horse." I never knew what it meant, but I'm pretty sure that applies to this situation. We've got a demand, under the opposition motion today, for a referendum. Let's think about the history—

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** On a point of order, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Yes, I've noticed it, thank you: the clock. The clerk is—are we set? Is it OK? The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

**Mr Parsons:** If we think about the opposition party's stance over the last eight years toward democracy and toward taxes and toward the public, I can recall when the previous government rammed through legislation to amalgamate municipalities. If I remember right, the city of Toronto actually held a referendum. There was a referendum held that people voted on. Money was spent in the name of democracy to see whether the people in this community wanted to be amalgamated into one large area.

The answer was a resounding no, and the Premier at that time said, "Referendums don't count. Referendums don't matter. The people didn't understand what they were voting on and we have no intention of being influenced by the referendum." A legitimately held referendum by a municipal government was discounted by this. Indeed, I would suggest to you one of the challenges, if you wanted to do a referendum, was the underfunding by this previous government of Elections Ontario, resulting in an electors' list that was a joke in October—the number of people who had to be sworn in, the number of people who had to come forward and do the extra work to get on the voters' list, because it wasn't worth it on the part of that government to spend money to make sure democracy functioned.

That government believed taxation was so important that there should be a referendum on the issue. Let's look at the number of issues they rammed through without wanting a referendum on it and without disposing of it prior to an election.

They wanted to sell Ontario Hydro, not just without a referendum but actually without any legislation that would make it possible. Nowhere during their election campaigns did they run on a platform of, "We're going to close hospitals." Nowhere did they say, "We're going to lease out the 407 for 99 years." They sold water power generating plants. In the name of democracy, they took over school boards from duly elected trustees, trustees who had been given a mandate by the public, and this government rode roughshod over them and eliminated them and sent in people who—as it turned out, the problem wasn't the trustees who were publicly elected; the problem was the underfunding and the cutbacks by this government. We have seen a massive number of user fees implemented in this province, and folks, they're taxes. Do you remember, "No user fees, but we're going to have a co-payment fee for seniors on the drug plan"? You own that. That was your creation, and folks, that's a tax increase.

On the other hand, the plans by this government were laid out very clearly two years ago. If you examine the Taxpayer Protection Act—which, by the way, your party broke, admitted they broke, had to go back and do corrections on it, but admitted they broke—we duly indicated, made public—I can recall when the previous government brought forward a bill that was going to give

the education tax reduction to senior citizens. We voted against it and you laughed. You laughed at us because you knew the public would never support us because of your mantra of tax cuts. What the seniors of this province said was, "We want to stay in our homes, but the tax cut on education won't do it. What we need is home care. What we need is medical care." This is a party that stood for services to keep seniors in their homes and not a cheap vote-buying ploy of, "We're going to rebate your education taxes." The seniors in this province didn't buy it.

That government intended, if they were re-elected, to sell \$2.1 billion worth of provincially purchased assets, assets bought by the people of Ontario. In every debate I witnessed and took part in across Ontario, when the question went to the Progressive Conservative candidate, "What are you going to sell?" the response was, "Wait. Maybe something. We're not going to say what it is."

So the flim-flam that took place during the election was in trying to conceal what were going to be tax increases, because if you sell provincial assets, you can sell them only once. That's a dilemma. You can sell them only once.

I say, this motion has absolutely no credibility. We made very clear each and every thing we would do, prior to the election. The people of Ontario said, "We want services. We don't want cheap tax-cutting ploys that put our education at risk, that put our health care at risk." Dalton McGuinty owes no apology to anyone for the bills that have been introduced in this House. There was a referendum called the provincial election. At that time, the people said, "Give us services, give us value for our dollar, but don't give us any more cheap tricks."

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** It's an honour to be able to speak in support of this motion that stands in the name of Mr Eves, our leader. People are accustomed, I think, to new governments blaming previous governments, or the previous government, for this issue or that issue. This new Liberal government certainly has been doing a lot of that. But there's something greater here with respect to the new government, and that is their unwillingness to assume the responsibility, to assume the mantle of government. They break promises. They fail the trust test with the people of Ontario—nothing more dramatic than the pledge signed by Mr McGuinty, who is now the Premier, with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, indicating that he would not raise taxes and his separate statements that he would hold the line on taxes.

1610

People in Ontario, I think, are not surprised that the new government would blame the government before. But they are surprised that a government would give a very long list of promises—231 of them—and then get elected on the basis of those promises and immediately start breaking them.

One of the largest promises was number two, which is to cancel tax breaks for—and here's what the Liberals called them—"exclusive private schools." "Exclusive private schools": that conjures up images of the small



number of very expensive private schools in the province of Ontario. They don't tell the people of Ontario this—in fact, they want the people of Ontario not to believe this—but they know that two thirds of the independent schools in the province of Ontario are religious or culturally based, that they are Jewish schools, that they are Muslim schools, that they are Christian schools, Montessori schools and other schools, that the parents who choose to send their children to those schools are of modest means.

Mr McGuinty used to talk a lot about working families. He used to profess caring about working families. Those are the families in Ontario that choose to send their children to independent schools. Mr McGuinty doesn't talk any more, you'll notice, about working families.

Is there a financial reason, a fiscal reason, to retroactively abolish the equity in education tax credit? No, there isn't. In fact, the savings would be much less than the Minister of Education spent last week, which was \$112 million, most of which went to the Toronto school boards—\$60 million. Coincidentally, \$46 million went to the Toronto District School Board to get rid of their deficit. He called it something else. A remarkable coincidence: a debt of between \$43 million and \$48 million, according to the business supervisor of the Toronto District School Board, and the first thing the Minister of Education does, after pleading poverty and talking about deficits, is to take \$46 million of Ontario taxpayers' money and give it to a board where the trustees broke the law by voting in favour of a deficit in their budgeting, contrary to the provisions of the Education Act.

Retroactive taxation is abhorrent, and for good reason. Mr McGuinty knows—he'll remember, I hope, from his law school days—the principle against retroactive legislation and, in particular, retroactive tax legislation. As Mr Eves has pointed out, these working families, all across the province of Ontario—in 2002 and in 2003, for two school years now—have planned their budgets based on this tax credit, and well they should. The whole principle is that people are entitled to rely on the law as it is when they make their plans.

But the Liberals don't do that. First of all, they talk about "exclusive private schools," which of course is nonsense. Tell the people from the Christian schools here today and the Muslim schools and the Jewish schools about their exclusive private schools. What a way to mislead the people of the province of Ontario. What a way to turn on working families in the province of Ontario.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I normally don't like to interrupt in a middle of a discussion, but the word "mislead" is not appropriate in this place.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ernie Parsons):** Would you withdraw?

**Mr Flaherty:** I withdraw.

How inaccurate to say that to the people of Ontario. You Liberals did that. You did it right here. You said, "exclusive private schools." What nonsense; you know

it's not true. You know in your own ridings it's not true. But you went ahead and you did it and you said that. You wanted people in Ontario to believe that something was so that was not so. Shame, I say to you. Shame for saying that it has anything to do with fiscal reality in the province of Ontario when you go ahead within the first few weeks in government and spend \$112 million to bail out your union friends at the Toronto District School Board. You'll sacrifice the parents, the working families, the working Christian school families, the working Jewish families, the working Muslim families—you'll do all that for the public sector unions at the Toronto District School Board. I hope you're proud of yourselves. And you'll do it retroactively, contrary to fundamental legal principles and public policy.

I say to the Liberal government, the people of Ontario expect you to do several things. At least do these things: Keep some of your promises. It is a matter of trust. First, try to keep some of the 231 promises so that young people in Ontario can have some faith in the political process. You're doing tremendous damage to that faith. We already have low voter turnouts, and you've done tremendous harm by putting forth this whole list of promises, getting into office and not even trying to keep your promises. In fact, you immediately started to break promises.

So try to keep some promises, but secondly, stop whining. You're elected. You're the government of the day, so at least show up at work, start acting like the government and stop whining. Get to work and do the best you can, because we all care about this province; we all care about this country. Do the best you can, as poor a performance as that no doubt will be. But do the best you can, be the government, stand up for your promises or at least some of them, and then the people of Ontario will decide, as they see the evolution of your government, whether you are worthy of any trust. So far, you are not.

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** I think there are a number of things to be said, particularly re the foregoing remarks from the MPP from Whitby-Ajax, Mr Flaherty. Before I engage in some destructive notation on that, I would for a moment, with your permission, Speaker, just like to set the record straight for the people of Ontario on what the philosophy of the previous, outgoing Tory regime actually is.

Once upon a time, they used to say, "We're not actually the government; we've come here to fix the government." I would like to say, with respect, that they were actually there to sell the government. They were actually there to offload the government or download the government to every other board or every other level of government that they could find. In particular, for example, the MPP from Whitby-Ajax, Mr Flaherty, spent considerable energy talking about how, once a government assumes power, it blames the previous government. I would submit to the people of Ontario that the previous PC Tory regime made an industry out of blaming the federal Liberal government for years upon years. I would say, with respect, that it's only the Dalton McGuinty gov-

ernment in Ontario, which has just taken office, approximately eight weeks ago, that is attempting to remedy those ills.

In particular, I was very surprised that Mr Flaherty, the MPP from Whitby-Ajax, would actually begrudge the Minister of Education and those people in Ontario who will benefit from the \$112-million commitment to English as a second language. I would say, with respect, sir, that that is a fundamental attack on a number of individuals, new Canadians, Canadianizing individuals who have perhaps come from other parts of the world and whose language skills may not be up to speed. I would say, with respect, sir, that is in particular one reason why I am proud, as the son of immigrants, to be part of this government that has made, in difficult circumstances, in a time of financial constraint, a deep commitment to those individuals who may benefit with English-as-a-second-language commitments to reintegrate into society.

I'd also like to say to the people of Ontario that the individuals opposite who formed the previous government—really their philosophy was one of selling out Ontario, whether they were dealing with Ontario Hydro, the 407, the idea of inspecting water, inspecting meat. As you know, Speaker, they just recently, just before we took office, actually OK'd the inspection of nuclear facilities in Ontario. That's the Tory regime, the Tory way: to privatize the very enterprises that government should have responsibility for.

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I would also like to say, with respect, that it's the Tory regime that actually has left us with not only the financial deficit—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Qaadri:** —that has been well documented and well researched—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member from Oshawa, will you take your seat. I called order; I didn't ask you start debating with me. I just called order.

**Mr Qaadri:** Thank you for intervening, Speaker. I think it is important to be able to speak in Parliament without hindrance, and for the people of Ontario to hear the truth. Thank you for intervening with the member, Mr O'Toole.

I would like to say, Speaker, through you to the people of Ontario—

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: He's not to name members by name, but by riding only.

I believe that in terms of what this new member is saying, some of what he is putting on the record is absolutely incorrect.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr O'Toole:** I think the member should stand up—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member from Oshawa, take your seat, please.

The member is reminded that he is not to use names; use ridings in here, please.

**Mr Qaadri:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Durham for the kerfuffle.

**Mr Flaherty:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The previous point of order was made by the member for Durham, not Oshawa.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Qaadri:** It seems the kerfuffle was added to by all members of the Tory party.

I would like to say that the new McGuinty government inherited not only the very well documented financial deficit, but also, it seems, a deficit in several sectors, whether it's the social sector, the energy sector and beyond. It's really our responsibility to make good on a number of our commitments, in particular the reckless corporate tax giveaways that have been instituted by the previous regime.

I would also like to say very quickly that I think one of the members opposite, in speaking about the removal of a tax credit being equivalent to a tax hike—I would like to illustrate with a very quick example. If the very well tailored suits that a number of the MPPs from the Tory party happen to be wearing cost, let's say for argument's sake, \$1,000 and I were to offer them a discount coupon for \$100 and then remove it as we assumed office, is that a tax increase, is that a price increase, or do we return to the status quo? I leave it to your own logic, Speaker, and to the logic of the people of Ontario.

**Mr O'Toole:** I'll just be allocating a couple of minutes to this, because other members want to get in on it.

The member from Etobicoke North made a number of assumptions, many of them incorrect. I think I should tell you that I've just come from one of the most undemocratic processes, with the discussion of Bill 2. You time-allocated an omnibus bill that really encompassed about five principal areas of very important policy.

Our member for this caucus, Mr Baird, was speaking very passionately and quite directly to the issue of retroactivity, the clause in the bill that to me will stand up over time as one of your nemeses. That section is referred to in the explanatory notes. I'll read it to you: "An amendment to section 8 of the act repeals the equity in education tax credit as of January 1, 2003."

That was a slippery slope that I believe all presenters—and I'm going to name the presenters, starting with Jack Mintz, who is a professor at the University of Toronto. He said, "Retroactivity in taxation is a slippery slope." Others went on to say it was mean-spirited. In many respects, I want to put them on record: B'Nai Brith Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Jewish Congress of Ontario, Children First: School Choice Trust, the Islamic Society of North America, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools and the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools and others all, without exception, went on the record as pleading.

I would have supported this particular section of the bill, because they did run on cancelling the equity in education tax credit. What they didn't run on was retroactively affecting those hard-working families who



were expecting for their children in independent schools a credit that would amount to some \$400, which means a lot after tax to hard-working families who take that determination.

I want to put on the retroactivity debate here that even today Mr Barrett, my partner on that committee, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, was a small bit late in attending. It was the assumption that the committee was going to start at 4; well, they started, as he understood, early, and finished before he even got there. He wanted to bring some very important input to that debate. They time-allocated it.

We're going into Bill 5 starting Monday. Bill 5 is dealing with auto insurance and their failed promise on auto insurance. They have time-allocated this bill. By 4 o'clock tomorrow, everyone who wants to have input, the stakeholders in this bill, will have to have their input in to the clerk. This committee will then decide when they actually speak to the bill by 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon, and the meetings start at 10. I am appalled by the lack of democracy, the lack of access to government on the very important issue that auto insurance is.

With that, I'll relinquish the time to the other speakers who wish to address many of the frailties in this particular debate today.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I address my remarks to the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey. I note he was very skilfully defended by the member for Whitby-Ajax.

I sincerely hope that this measure has been introduced by the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey with tongue in cheek. It introduces a measure demanding that this new government simply ignore the landscape of waste, neglect and damage facing this government that was left by their own government less than 12 weeks ago. I hope the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey will not take it personally if I and other members of this House decline to support this motion.

Permit me to offer a few points of constructive criticism and helpful suggestions in a spirit of bipartisan co-operation that I hope will assist the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, perhaps with an amended version or maybe a redraft of this motion.

The member opposite asserts that we should have a referendum on rolling back the uncoded, hastily constructed and unfocused tax plan that has already been the subject of a referendum, that being the October 2 election. Just as a reminder to the members opposite, the people of Ontario took a full month of intensive debate, neighbourhood by neighbourhood. They thought about it. Ontarians debated it at their kitchen tables and over their water coolers, and on October 2, Ontario told the party headed by the member opposite, "Thanks, but we'll pass on this proposal."

As a result of that referendum of October 2, the member from Ottawa South moved to the Speaker's right, along with his party, and the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey moved to the Speaker's left, along with the durable and vocal survivors of his

party. Should we, therefore, have a referendum on this measure? Been there; done that.

The Taxpayer Protection Act that was brought to this Legislature by the government headed by the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey states that a referendum is unnecessary when financial plans are clearly stated to the chief electoral officer prior to the election by the party that forms the next government.

The party that now forms the government of Ontario could not have been more clear. It seems that the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey wishes not merely that this government implement his own party's failed agenda but also finance it through continued gutting of Ontario's health care, education and social services systems. The member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey may wish to reinvest some of his party's research resources in order that his facts be more thoroughly checked prior to making such assertions, especially in a motion.

**1630**

An interesting analysis of the motion made by the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey would be to lay the member opposite's party promises side by side with the Taxpayer Protection Act on which the member's motion so piously stands.

The member's party, in its letter to the chief election officer of Ontario, promised to raise taxes on average people: higher gas taxes, higher hotel taxes and higher parking fees. I quote verbatim from a letter to Elections Ontario signed by the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey on September 17, 2003:

"It would allow municipalities to propose new tax ideas to raise money for a specific program or project. These taxes could be placed on only three activities within the municipality: sales of gasoline, rental of hotel/motel rooms and use of parking spaces." Sounds like a tax hike to me.

It makes Ontarians shudder to think where we might be if the October 2 election and referendum had gone the other way. On top of the \$5.6-billion deficit we now face, this House would be trying to sell Ontarians' assets at fire sale prices to pay for, among others, a \$4.3-billion corporate tax giveaway and other measures. Ontarians would have stood helpless while the province's current-year deficit plummeted past \$10 billion, and all of this on top of the \$21 billion in extra debt piled up by the former government. As the member for Etobicoke North has said, these are the people who campaigned saying they were not the government; they came to fix the government. Well, they fixed the government, much in the same way one would fix their cat.

If indeed the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey stood on his record for any purpose save and except to protect it from public scrutiny, he would have abided by the Taxpayer Protection Act himself. Consider the facts: The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey delayed \$1.518 billion in tax cuts, contrary to the provisions of the act, in his 2000 budget. This is the Taxpayer Protection Act that the member's own party introduced.

Specific reductions in taxes that the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey promised but did not implement in his 2000 budget included reductions in personal income tax, private school tax credits, residential education property taxes and corporate taxes. Yet the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey chose not to go to Ontarians in a referendum when he broke the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act himself. Shame. Oh, well, one standard while in government and another while in opposition, Ontarians must assume.

There is so much in the motion from the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey on which one could offer other constructive and helpful amendments and other suggestions that I would like to yield the floor to another member to help also. Should the motion either be withdrawn or fail to pass, I look forward to another opportunity to examine it or its successor in the context of the full and open debate that the government of which I am proud to be a part has brought back to Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I think I did have the opportunity to congratulate you on your election to that prestigious chair, and I'll do it once more.

**Ms Churley:** Appointment. He wasn't elected.

**Mr Runciman:** Well, I'll look at it as an election. In any event, he's sitting there, and I'm sure he will do a good job for all of us in the House over the next four years.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the motion. It certainly draws the attention of the public to the very apparent weaknesses of this government after only six or seven weeks in office. I think there has certainly been a lot of focus with respect to broken promises. This isn't something new. I guess it's new and quite a revelation to the press gallery and to many in the media to see a government come into office and, within a few short weeks, break a significant series of platform promises that helped to get them elected.

When you go back to earlier governments, this was common practice, making promises—figments of the drafters' imaginations that might have some impact in attracting votes in certain segments and regions of the province—and then for a variety of justifications and reasons, the government of the day would fail to meet those commitments. We certainly saw it in the Red Book at the federal level of the Liberal government; we certainly saw it in the NDP's promises during the 1990 election, when they ignored virtually all of their campaign promises; and we saw it during the Peterson era as well.

I think it's relevant to look back on those days because what changed, of course, was the election of the Harris government and the Common Sense Revolution. One of the major reasons that our government was re-elected in 1999 was the fact that we were branded and identified—whether you agreed or disagreed with the government and Premier Harris, we were identified as a first in Canadian politics in many respects, but certainly in terms of keeping promises. That was a badge of honour

certainly for someone like myself and, I know, others who served in the government during those days.

Again, I think it's relevant to look back at the 1985-90 era with the David Peterson government. Some would say, "This is a new day; this is a new era; this is a different Liberal government." But I tend to believe that a Liberal is Liberal is a Liberal. We're seeing that in terms of the initial rash of broken promises. It's also clearly indicated by the initiatives that they have undertaken, by bringing in the largest single tax increase in the history of the province within their first few weeks in office. I think that, again, is reflective of the practices of the former Liberal government, when they increased taxes in this province something like 32 or 33 times. In parallel, they also increased spending, almost doubling the budget in the province, and had a very negative impact on the investment climate and the job creation climate in the province. They increased welfare rates so that we were well above the norm across the country. As a result, we were attracting an influx of people to go on to the welfare rolls, people who simply had very little, if any, incentive to remove themselves from the rolls.

Some of you will remember the infamous tire tax, the gas guzzler tax, tobacco, booze taxes, the commercial concentration levy in the GTA, and personal income taxes. You name it: The Liberal government of 1985-90 ran rampant when it came to taxes, and certainly was a failure to show any degree of fiscal responsibility whatsoever. I think we're seeing the signs of a similar approach to governing by the new Liberal government.

We've heard comments with respect to what we have described as a bogus deficit, in an effort to try and demonize the former government. That's understandable in political terms. Our brand, of course, after coming into a very desperate situation in 1995 of spending \$1.1 million an hour more than we were taking in and being able to turn that around, make very difficult decisions, eliminate an \$11-billion-plus deficit and have four consecutive balanced budgets is a brand we're very proud of. We would have had a fifth balanced budget this fiscal year if we'd had the confidence of the electors. We've shown how that could be done.

We've now had confirmation from a number of objective observers, including, just recently, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, indicating that if there's a deficit in excess of \$600 million, that will be purely a Liberal deficit. Hopefully, taxpayers and other Ontarians are going to pay attention to that.

There's a statement being made by the Minister of Finance next week. We're anxiously awaiting it and being very suspicious. I hate to be cynical, but given the words and actions of this government over the past few weeks, I think we have justification to be cynical. I think we're going to hear the Minister of Finance suggest that the deficit is even higher than \$5.6 billion, and is going to indicate that it may be \$6 billion or \$7 billion. In reality, what's happening is that there is no meaningful effort being undertaken to try and rein in any possible deficit in terms of government restraint. In fact, what this govern-



ment plans to do is to continue to attempt to demonize the former government and spend into that projection, if you will, to ensure that at the end of this fiscal year they will have a deficit. Whatever the Minister of Finance says next week, they'll spend right into that.

1640

I think that's truly regrettable for the taxpayers of this province, but it is simply a sign of things to come. We ran a campaign which was very roundly criticized, in terms of being negative. I think we could have broadened it and said the Liberal Party is not up to the job. I say that because—what are we going to base it on? We're going to base it on past history, on their first seven weeks in office and on the long laundry list of promises they made, many of which are truly unrealistic, many of which are clearly unaffordable, many of which will break the bank and once again put us into an uncompetitive position, chasing investment and jobs out of this province. That may take two or three years to show up, but ultimately it is going to happen with this government in office. Again ultimately, the voters of Ontario will turn to the Conservative Party to bring realism and practicality back to government and continued—

**Mr Chudleigh:** Honesty.

**Mr Runciman:** Honest government as well. My colleague suggests I should include that as an adjective, and I think it's quite accurate to say honest government that will continue to put this House back on the road it should be on, leading North America in terms of jobs, investment and quality of life on this continent. Thank you for this opportunity.

**L'hon Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture; ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones):** Cela me fait plaisir aujourd'hui d'adresser cette Assemblée au nom des gens d'Ottawa-Vanier.

Alors, on sait qu'aujourd'hui la question est, est-ce qu'on doit avoir un référendum pour renverser les réductions d'impôts des sociétés pour annuler les crédits d'impôts bénéfiques des écoles privées et puis, pour maintenir les impôts particuliers au plus bas niveau?

Je pense que le référendum, on l'a eu le 2 octobre. Le 2 octobre, les gens de l'Ontario, les Ontariens et les Ontariennes, ont élu un gouvernement libéral parce qu'ils étaient inquiets et ils veulent remettre la province et donner les services aux citoyens comme ils étaient habitués.

Pendant ma campagne électorale, j'ai fait beaucoup de porte-à-porte, et les choses que j'entendais, c'est que les gens étaient inquiets à propos des soins de santé. On voulait premièrement qu'on améliore les soins de santé. On voulait que l'on améliore l'éducation en Ontario et la sécurité publique.

Ce que les gens nous disaient, c'est que les Conservateurs ont donné à la province un déficit, bien sûr, un déficit financier, mais ce n'est pas seulement un déficit financier mais un déficit selon aussi la sécurité publique.

J'ai visité certaines personnes qui m'ont demandé même d'entrer dans leur demeure parce qu'ils voulaient que je voie de visu ce que les coupures du gouvernement précédent ont fait. Je voudrais vous illustrer un endroit où

on m'a invitée à entrer. Alors, on avait dans le salon de cette maison-là comme une salle de soins intensifs. On avait une dame qui était sur un respirateur, on avait un enfant aussi qui était sur un respirateur, et le mari et père de cet enfant-là voulait me montrer ce que les coupures dans le domaine de la santé, et surtout les coupures aux centres d'accès aux soins de santé, pouvaient représenter chez les citoyens. Cette mère et cet enfant avaient besoin des infirmières 24 heures, sept jours par semaine. On a averti le mari, qui avait l'aide du centre d'accès pour recruter les infirmières dont il avait besoin, que maintenant on ne pouvait plus le faire. C'était le mari et père qui devait recruter les infirmières. Alors, je lui ai demandé, « Est-ce que vous faites ça à plein temps? » Il m'a dit, « Non, je travaille. Je dois travailler puisque quelqu'un doit payer pour ça. »

À d'autres endroits où j'ai frappé, les gens m'ont démontré la situation dans les écoles d'aujourd'hui. On me disait, « Pour que mon enfant commence l'école, j'ai reçu une longue liste de la part de l'école m'indiquant ce dont on avait besoin. » Je ne pouvais pas croire qu'on demandait aux enfants d'apporter le papier de toilette, qu'on leur demandait d'apporter les essuie-mains et d'autres choses pour un montant de 375 \$. Les familles ne pouvaient pas défrayer tous ces coûts.

On nous dit aujourd'hui, « Vous devez aller à un référendum parce que vous ne pouvez pas faire ce que vous devez faire. » On sait que le rapport du vérificateur général parle d'un déficit dans le secteur de la sécurité publique. Le rapport Epps décrit en détail notre déficit dans le secteur de l'énergie. Bien sûr les gens étaient aussi inquiets suite au « blackout » qu'on a eu l'été dernier. On voulait former un nouveau gouvernement qui allait assurer aux citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario une meilleure énergie et qu'on ne vivra plus ce que l'on a vécu l'été dernier, c'est-à-dire un « blackout. »

Alors, on veut que le gouvernement assure aux gens et donne aux gens les services qui sont nécessaires. Nous tenons notre promesse électorale. Nous allons couper ces crédits d'impôt qui sont donnés aux écoles privées. Je dois vous dire que ça a été très bien reçu, parce que ce qu'on veut, c'est que ces argents-là soient réinvestis dans le système public. On voit que les classes sont surchargées, les professeurs ont des classes de 30 ou 35 étudiants, elles souffrent de surmenage, et on veut qu'on règle ce problème.

Bien sûr on dit aujourd'hui, « Vous n'avez pas fait ceci. Vous n'avez pas fait ça. » On a été élus le 2 octobre dernier et c'est bien sûr que dans deux mois on ne peut pas réaliser tout ce qu'on doit réaliser. On doit prendre le temps. On doit faire les choses comme on doit les faire. Premièrement, on doit stabiliser nos finances. Pour stabiliser nos finances, c'est important qu'on coupe ces réductions d'impôt pour pouvoir les réinvestir où elles doivent être réinvesties.

On a beaucoup parlé de la réduction d'impôt aux personnes âgées pour compenser les taxes qui sont payées pour notre système d'éducation. Je vous dirais, monsieur le Président, que les personnes âgées dans mon

comté étaient très vexées que le gouvernement ait mis de l'avant une telle proposition, parce que les personnes âgées veulent contribuer à la formation de nos jeunes. Elles veulent contribuer à l'éducation des jeunes parce qu'elles savent bien qu'on doit avoir des personnes qualifiées pour prendre soin des gens, alors on doit avoir de bonnes écoles pour pouvoir s'assurer qu'on donne de la formation adéquate.

Aussi, une chose qui les inquiète beaucoup c'est les soins de santé, alors elles veulent contribuer aussi au financement des soins de santé. On sait que les soins de santé demandent une grande part de notre budget, et ces personnes veulent s'assurer qu'on investisse dans les soins de santé, puis aussi dans les soins à domicile. Encore là, beaucoup de personnes âgées doivent être institutionnalisées parce qu'on n'a pas les soins à domicile nécessaires. On a coupé les heures des soins à domicile, et elles doivent être institutionnalisées ou la famille doit prendre en charge les parents.

Je m'objecte aujourd'hui à ce qu'on adopte la proposition qui est mise de l'avant par le parti conservateur, et je crois que c'est important que l'on passe le « Bill 2 » qui a été mis de l'avant par le ministre des Finances.

1650

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'll give it my best shot.

I'm pleased to enter the debate in support of the resolution. I won't embarrass myself and the members of the assembly by attempting it in French, but if you do turn to channel 3, I think you might be able to hear it that way. They're distracting me.

I just want to bring some quick words of support for this resolution, because I am very concerned about the broken promises that are impacting the pocketbooks of the people that I represent in the beautiful riding of Erie-Lincoln. Specifically, as has been highlighted by my colleagues across the floor, there was a solemn commitment by then-candidate, now-Premier McGuinty not to raise taxes. In fact, we saw in the second bill in the Legislature the largest tax hike in the history of the province in a single day, particularly concerning, in my riding, many supporters of independent schools, working-class families.

I remember, when knocking on doors, one young single mother with three children whom she put through independent schools. She lived in a duplex—somebody of very modest means—paid her taxes into the public system fully and, because she believed in an independent school and Christian education in this particular circumstance, she paid tuition for three students on top of this.

I think it is the right thing to do, to support parental choice in schools and stand strongly behind that initiative. Granted, they are taking that away, but what I find particularly reprehensible is this notion of retroactivity. Dalton McGuinty's tax increases begin January 1, 2004, in most respects, with the notable exception of the

independent school initiative, which is retroactive to January 1, 2003, meaning that working families that had gone through 11 months of the year expecting up to \$1,400 per child this year in a credit to their tax find out in the eleventh month, at the eleventh hour, that it's being taken away from them. I can't see that this has a major impact on the total dollars to the provincial economy, but it has a major impact on families like those I've mentioned in Niagara and in Dunnville. The \$1,400 they were expecting, going into Christmas, will no longer be there.

I ask the members across the floor, even if they oppose the initiative in general, to please back off the retroactivity. As I have said, it's cruel; it's a punitive measure. I wish and hope they will listen to the debate and back away from at least that measure, and ideally implement the tax credit as a whole.

Secondly, to our farmers across the province, I've been reading my recent copy of Ontario Farmer, where they discuss, "Cap Comes off Hydro Rates." It reads, "Despite election promises to keep electricity rates at the same level as set by the former Tory government, Ontario's new Liberal government now says that it will lift the cap on prices...." It has a major impact on seniors in Niagara and a major impact on farmers in my area. Particularly the feather industry and the greenhouse industry, who are up against some very difficult competition, will be impacted dramatically by these initiatives. On the same front page, "Nutrient Enforcement Goes Back to Environment Ministry," the first line of the article in Ontario Farmer reads, "In a move that has side-swiped the Ontario agriculture industry, the new ... government is shifting the compliance ... to the Ministry of the Environment." The agriculture community is very concerned about the early days of the Dalton McGuinty government, not only for the broken promises but for the impact it's going to have on their economic viability, the impact it's going to have on their pocketbooks.

Lastly—I want to share my time with my colleagues—I wanted to point out that I fear that this is just the beginning. I asked a very direct question to the Premier last week, because I suspect—I have not seen the capacity for them to find savings. They bragged in the campaign that they would find \$2 billion in savings. I've not seen a real effort in that respect as of yet. What I think is going to happen is that they'll turn to what looks like an easier road; it's more painful in the long run, but an easier road of hiking taxes. I asked the Premier specifically if he was going to raise the gas tax, if he was going to raise the taxes or fees on wine, spirits or beer, or if he was going to raise personal income tax even more. After 100 or 200 words, the Premier did not give me a yes or a no. During the campaign he was very clear: no new taxes. He was not increasing taxes. In a simple question in the House, you'd think he'd say no. So the message to the taxpayers back home is: Hold on to your pocketbooks; Dalton McGuinty is coming for them.

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The answer is no.



**The Deputy Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate the Deputy Premier for the day saying that, but I asked Premier McGuinty very directly if he was raising these taxes. You'd think it would be pretty straightforward, because he said during the campaign, "Read my lips:"—basically—"no new taxes." But he refused to answer those individual questions, so I say watch out; the real Dalton McGuinty is in town. Hold on to your pocketbooks because there's one big McGuinty tax hike coming your way.

**Ms Churley:** I would just say to the member from Guelph-Wellington who stood up, what we're going to do here is make sure, and I hope the Liberals will agree, that the Tories get the last word here, given that it's their members who are putting this forward today. We'll all be nice about that. So that's why I'm standing up now, because as you know—and I'd like to start by saying thank you to all the members who gave unanimous consent today to allow New Democrats a tiny bit of time to debate in this House. This is the new democracy in Ontario, under Liberals. My notes said to me today that New Democrats, due to the rules, aren't able to participate unless unanimous consent is given. Well, unanimous consent was given for 15% of the time, and I'm here holding down the fort today taking that 15% of the time on behalf of the seven New Democrats in this place. Now, the members are going to argue and say that's only fair, up to 20%. We know you're not going to give us party status. Trying to come to an agreement here, we've put forward a reasonable solution to this problem. We believe you should be getting party status when you get 15% of the vote. The number was arbitrarily picked back in 1999 by the then Tory government. We objected then, but finally an agreement was made because that's where they want—

**Hon Mr Caplan:** You supported it.

**Ms Churley:** Yes, we did, but it was because our proposal of four, five at the most, was rejected. I hope you end up over here. Given the way you're going and the promises you're breaking, you may very well. I've got to tell you that this is a complete disservice to democracy in this province. In fact, it's not in the Liberals' interest to have only a few minutes of New Democrats today, because we take a different position from these Tories; we do. Mostly, we support you on this. We'll rail against the promises you've broken, and we will rail against the fact that Gerry Phillips, your Management Board chair, and your corrections minister, Mr Kwinter, made it very clear that they knew there was going to be a big deficit. They made it very clear. We have it in the notes. They knew. I'm not saying all the members knew. I don't think all your members were told this; I would like to think not, because they were all out there, Mr Speaker, including you, making promises that they, I guess, thought they could keep, while some of the senior members of the then opposition knew they were not going to be able to keep those promises.

1700

So we will rail about that on and on because we think—I can't use the word, what I actually think about what happened, what Liberals said to get elected, Mr Speaker, but you did, and you got elected knowing that there was going to be a big deficit and you couldn't keep these promises. In this area, on the debate today around the tax credits for private schools, we agree with the Liberals. In fact, before the Liberals were speaking in one voice about this, New Democrats—there were a couple of Liberal members, as you will recall, who were standing up in support of giving taxpayers' dollars to private schools. You weren't all together. I'm glad finally you did, but it was New Democrats in opposition who steadfastly together opposed the Tory move to give public funds to private schools when we saw the demise, under the Tory government, of our great public education system. We have to rebuild that system. We can't afford to be giving money to private schools, so we support the government on that.

I feel very badly about some of the people who, even with an election coming up—I would say they shouldn't have done it, because they knew where the Liberals stood, they knew where we stood, and that there would be a very good chance it might be a different government. They went ahead and utilized the quickly put in place tax break that the Tories brought in just before the election. Perhaps there should be something worked out with those people, especially if they're lower income.

We believe, as New Democrats, that our public system can and should accommodate those families who need cultural education for their children. In fact, we have examples of that already, clear across the province. In my leader's riding—Mr Hampton—he has a large First Nations population. So there are accommodations within the public schools for these kids to get some cultural education.

It's the same thing in my riding. There's a First Nations school in the city, in Dundas school in my riding. It's great and it's paid for by the public system. But it's within that system, therefore abiding by all of the standards of the public system. There are other schools, schools like Contact, alternative schools for kids who are having a hard time coping within the existing education system, that are set up and funded under the public system. To say that it's not possible to help fund through the public system these certain cultural and other special needs—its actually been done, and can and should be improved upon. That's where New Democrats stand. So we support you on that. You've got Tories who don't support you on anything, frankly.

We're pretty upset about the broken promises. One of the major ones was a broken promise about improving and enhancing democracy. We feel, and I believe more than 15% of the population feels, that our viewpoint is an important one in this Legislature in terms of balance, that it's important that our voice be heard, particularly when day after day after day in question period—which has just become a complete farce. It's just a farce as we sit

here. I know the Liberal members when they stand up and ask their questions feel that it's insulting when we say it's fluff, but it is. That's not what democracy is supposed to be all about. Question period and debates in this House are supposed to be balanced, so that all viewpoints are heard so we can make the best possible decisions for all of the people of Ontario. We don't have that any more.

I've been in government and I've been in opposition. I see the pattern that emerges within this very broken system that we have, where ministers get involved in the bureaucracy and they're given their briefing notes. Very tough decisions have to get made in government. I know; I've been there. It's a lot easier, sitting in the opposition benches, to criticize. I know that full well. It's much, much harder to have to sit around that table and make hard decisions.

I also know what happens when backbenchers in government are given questions to ask the government of the day. They're not up asking hard-edge questions that the people need to hear, like that of my colleague today, the member for Nickel Belt, around funding for autistic children. We railed against the previous government's position on that, and we rail against this government. I will say to the government and I will say to those members who believe our position on this—and I believe there are many who support our position on full funding for autistic children over the age of six. They need us to be calling on the government day after day. They need the pressure there. They don't just need the government of the day—in fact, it's to the detriment of the people of Ontario, from my point of view, to have the only views you're hearing in opposition in this place mainly coming from Tories. I fundamentally disagree with their policies, and I think most of the Liberals do as well, but they're being pushed further and further to the right.

I will say again that as ministers and as some of the members who want to see more progressive policies put in place, as promised by the Liberals in the election, they're going to need to hear our voices. I have report after report after report just in the past few weeks of people coming forward wanting reinvestment in the environment, in conservation and efficiency, in violence against women. It goes on and on—that's just a few—where people are saying there is a huge social deficit. They're not happy hearing the Liberals, who have now come to power, saying things like, "We didn't know about the deficit. Now that we know about it"—it seems we're hearing things like—"we have to accelerate our agenda now." This is when it comes to hydro: "We were going to take those caps off. We weren't going to do it until 2006, but because of this deficit that we really didn't know about, we're going to have to accelerate that. We're going to have to do it sooner." Or we're hearing phrases like, "We have to stabilize our finances." My favourite one is the new terminology from some of the Liberals now around a new slogan for breaking what were called ironclad promises now being called "taking responsible action."

If you ask me; if you ask New Democrats; if you ask the parents of these autistic children; if you ask the parents and families of those 12,000 children who are waiting for mental health services; if you ask people in Walkerton, many of whom have ongoing, lifelong illnesses; if you ask people who are concerned about drinking water because of a report recently released showing that in many cases we don't know if our drinking water is safe or not; if you ask people who are eating meat, after the meat scandal; if you ask people now after the building collapsed here in Toronto what's more important to them, I think they're going to tell you that they want you to keep your promises and they want us to be in a position where we're reminding you day after day of those important promises that were made in a campaign, many of which have now been broken because of a deficit you say you didn't know about.

Now, Tories have their particular point of view, and that's reflected in their motion before us today. They know, as I know of course, that it's going to be voted down, and I think it should. I don't agree with the motion. I have concerns, as they do, about the retroactivity, particularly if low-income people went out there and borrowed money or are suffering as a result of that investment and are not going to now get what they thought they were investing in. Perhaps the government needs to look at—I see some puzzled frowns. I think the government needs to take a look at that and see if there's any undue hardship, because I think we would all agree that we don't want to see some people, through no fault of their own—perhaps they should have listened more carefully to campaign promises and waited. But I think the government would agree that there may be some hardship as a result.

I don't support this resolution before us today. I don't support most of the Tory positions on anything. I do support some of the Liberal positions. I support many of the campaign promises you made that are now being broken. I want to have the opportunity—I loved question period. I liked the days when I was able to get up and ask questions of the then government of the day. I don't have the opportunity to do that any more.

I know there's a proposal before us.

1710

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Democratic renewal.

**Ms Churley:** Pardon me?

**Mr Miller:** Democratic renewal.

**Ms Churley:** Democratic renewal.

I'm the critic now for our—I know you don't know who is the critic for what any more in the New Democratic Party, because it's not listed up there. We've got the list of the ministers and Tory critics on the Web site, but the New Democratic ones aren't. So let me tell you what I'm the critic for: environment. As the critic for the environment when the Tories sat over there, I was one of the people in the very early days who warned them that a Walkerton could happen, before it happened. Do you recall that?



It was even raised when Mr Harris, the then Premier, was interviewed at the Walkerton inquiry, by the head lawyer, that there were four or five warnings given to the government that something like that could happen. Two questions I asked in the Legislature were cited as pre-warnings that Walkerton could happen.

The government of the day was chastised for not listening to the opposition and for not listening to some others from outside, the then environmental commissioner and others, because it was very clear that with the kind of cuts and downloading and privatization that was happening, things were going to fall apart. Some of us could see it.

So I would say to the government members that it's important to have that voice on the other side, and you're not going to get it from the Tories. They're not going to be on their feet saying, "We want you to invest more money in hiring more meat inspectors," because they're the people who laid those people off in the first place, or "more building inspectors," because they're the people, because of their huge tax cuts, who laid them off in the first place, or "water inspectors, more nurses, and we want you to keep your promise of hiring"—what is it?—"8,000 new nurses." That's important. People voted for you because of those promises.

We want to be here, and you can rest assured that we will be here, in one form or another anyway, to make sure that you are held accountable to keep those promises. I think, if I look at some of my colleagues, my former opposition members here, you would want us to do that. You don't have strong opposition now—speaking of which, I must say that I find it passing strange and somewhat hilarious to hear Tories stand up and complain about the omnibus bill, the closure bill that the Liberals have imposed on this place, including this bill.

There are three bills and two substantive motions that the Tories are now starting to complain about. I want to remind them, as I called out earlier today, that they've been hoisted on their own petard because their House leader—I presume it was the House leader—got in bed with the Liberal House leader and made a deal.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** It must have been a big bed.

**Ms Churley:** That was a big event. I want to warn them: when you get in bed with the government House leader, you think you're all cozy and warm and things are going to work out OK. Then the next thing you know, you're lulled into sleep and you're pushed out on the cold floor in the middle of the night.

That's what happened here. You made this deal, you called it programming, and you did it without consulting with New Democrats because, after all, we don't have party status; we don't count in this place. It's the House leader, I believe, who said you almost had consensus. It's kind of like being almost pregnant. You can't be. You didn't have consensus, but because we don't have official party status, and that's the way things are being run around here now, which is why there's so much animosity and unkindness and nonsense in this place—there

always is, but it's worse than ever is because there's this attitude that both the parties can go away behind closed doors and make a deal.

This is called programming. Talk about doublespeak. What it really was, was a closure motion, the likes of which we've never seen in this Legislature, even under the Tories before: three different substantive bills and two substantive motions.

**Mr Patten:** It's been around since 1860.

**Ms Churley:** Yes, but in Britain. In Britain, let me tell you, when it was programmed, it was all parties agreeing. In this case, the New Democrats were left out and didn't agree. But now we've got government members standing up and complaining about this closure motion. They agreed to it.

**Mr Patten:** You wouldn't agree with anything.

**Ms Churley:** I'm just talking about the fact that they did agree to it and now they're complaining about it. I think they must have learned a lesson here. I think it's fine if we can all agree. That's the way this place is supposed to work, which is why we need to resolve this issue and get back to some kind of normalcy here, so that in certain areas we can agree to move the agenda forward.

I'm not supporting this resolution today, for the reasons I outlined. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate? The member from Guelph-Wellington.

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker. It's very good to see you in the chair this afternoon.

When we heard from the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, whose motion we're debating, he seemed to be asking two questions. He talked about whether the Liberal government is keeping its promises and then he asked whether we're obeying the law. I'd like to answer those two questions.

First of all, are we keeping our promises? This seems to be about our tax package that he's concerned about. I know certainly when I went door to door, I talked very clearly about getting rid of the private school tax credit. In fact, long before I even started going door to door, I was speaking out against the private school tax credit. When our leader, Mr McGuinty, was on the campaign trail, he spoke out very clearly about getting rid of the private school tax credit and reinvesting in public education. Even before the campaign started, immediately upon the announcement of the private school tax credit by the Tory government, our leader, Mr McGuinty, spoke out immediately against the private school tax credit and said that a Liberal government would get rid of it. We've been talking about getting rid of the private school tax credit ever since the day it was introduced. It was absolutely clear what we were going to do about the private school tax credit.

Why are we going to do that? The member from Toronto-Danforth has just very eloquently talked about

the value of public education and its ability to accommodate all children, regardless of their economic background, their social background, their ethnic background. We're the people who invest in special education, in public education. Public education invests in English as a second language. Public education invests in all children, and the member from Toronto-Danforth has just very eloquently laid out the argument in favour of public education. I must say, it therefore seems passing strange that her colleague, the member from Beaches-East York, just voted a few minutes ago in favour of keeping the private school tax credit in committee.

**Ms Churley:** Who did?

**Mrs Sandals:** The member for Beaches-East York. He did, in committee, a few minutes ago. I'm getting very confused about the NDP position on this because they also voted in favour of keeping the private school tax credit when we had first reading of the bill.

**Ms Churley:** No, that was first reading. We hadn't seen it yet.

**Mrs Sandals:** Now we've seen it, we've had second reading and it's in committee.

I believe the member from Toronto-Danforth when she makes her eloquent argument that that's what she truly believes. I believe my colleague in the NDP from Trinity-Spadina, who I also know passionately believes in getting rid of the private school tax credit. I must say I do think it's very strange that the NDP in committee would be voting that they should keep the private school tax credit.

However, we in the Liberal Party have been absolutely, totally clear on the subject of the private school tax credit. We have absolutely kept our promise to get rid of it and that's exactly what we're doing. What about the corporate tax cuts? When I was going door to door, I would hear over and over again, "I don't get enough home care. My kids' classes are too big." This just isn't working.

1720

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** Did people ask about corporate tax cuts?

**Mrs Sandals:** No. In fact, what people said to me when I went door to door was that they understand that if we're going to fix health care, fix education, fix the environmental problems, and if we're going to reinvest in our electricity system to actually make it work, you can't give away the revenue base. You have to have money to pay for it. So we told people we were going to stop giving away corporate tax cuts, and do you know what? We did it. We've kept our promises. We've also kept our promise around getting rid of the education property tax credit for seniors. We've kept all of our promises. I want everyone out there to remember that we are keeping our promises.

**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** I'm pleased to rise today and have an opportunity to respond to the opposition day motion. Our friends across the House are saying that we should have a referendum on rolling back the Tory tax cut plan. We had a referendum,

and that was on October 2, and the results were very clear. Each and every day, as we went out to our various communities to talk about what changes we would make as a government, the priority issue that we talked about at every single doorstep, in every single schoolyard, was the fact that our current Premier, then the Leader of the Opposition, was committed to becoming the Premier of this province that would put public education first. That is a commitment I made to the people of my community in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. That is a commitment we are keeping. We are going to be a government that reinvests in public education because public education is the ladder of opportunity for all. That ladder of opportunity is one where each and every child, whether they come from rural Ontario, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the Beaches or the north, deserves a good public education.

I want to talk to you a little bit about why public education is so important to me personally. This is a story that I shared with my own community during the campaign. The value of public, accessible education is one that is close to my heart. My grandmother raised 10 children. She did not have a lot of money, and she had a husband who left her in the early, early days. She was one of the first women who sought out child support. What she gave to those children was the ability to get a good education. Those 10 children became doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, social workers and labourers. In fact, one of her children was a predecessor—my uncle, Albert Roy, was a member of this very House many years ago. The value of public education and the opportunity that public education system gave my family is one I look at and say it got us where we are as a family today. My commitment to public education is one that is very close and dear to my heart.

Something that was very concrete on the campaign trail was our recognition of the need to reinvest in the public education system, that we were going to roll back the private school tax credit and the seniors' education property tax credit. We were clear to families who said to us on the campaign trail that they disagreed with us. We said, "If you disagree with us, then we're not the people for you, but let me be clear about what we are going to do." We were always clear that those were the steps we were going to take.

Our commitment to public education has been further highlighted as we've sat in the Legislature these last number of days. Despite the extremely serious financial situation that our province is in, with a \$5.6-billion deficit, we have found the money to reinvest in our public education system. We are making the commitments that we need to make in order to make sure that the system works for kids in our city schools: ESL classes, making sure that our new Canadians and the kids in our inner-city schools have the money that they need. We're proud of that fact because we know, like in my own family, public education is the great equalizer. It will allow all of those children to become whatever their families want them to be and reach the goals that they've set out for themselves.



I also want to talk about the fact that we were also clear on the campaign trail that we would roll back the corporate tax cut. As some of you in this House know, I came from the corporate world. My colleagues said to me, "You're not going to raise corporate taxes, are you?" I said, "We are going to roll back the most recent corporate tax cut." Yes, we are, because we need the money to reinvest in our public services. The people on Bay and King and wherever they are in the business world understand. They're the very people who are prepared to reinvest in those public services, because they themselves have used those public services. It's more important to them to make sure that their grandmother has a good long-term-care facility, that their child has a good education system and that we have an opportunity to reinvest in and re-strengthen our public education system. So I say to the those folks that they are responsible. I thank them for that, and I thank Ontarians for giving us the mandate in the referendum that we had on October 2 to do the good work that we intend to do and for allowing us to meet the commitments that we have made.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate. The member for York South.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** It's close. It's York West. It's just on the northern boundaries.

I join the debate on the motion put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, which is part of our democratic process. The Leader of the Opposition has chosen to introduce this motion, but unfortunately it fails to accomplish what perhaps the Leader of the Opposition was intending. In the few minutes that I have, I'll explain why it fails and does not deserve support.

We are just coming out of eight years of unabated attack on our wonderful institution. This requires leadership, it requires quick action and it requires a positive attitude. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, the new government, are just beginning to deliver on that. Why is that? It's because we have said what we are saying today and we are doing what we were saying during the election campaign.

We were asking one particular thing of all the candidates, and of course of our leader: We need change. Do you know what? The people of Ontario embraced that call for change. We are doing that today. I have to say, less than a month since we have taken possession of this wonderful House here and started to work on behalf of the people of Ontario, we have already delivered on a very large number of those promises. We have already done a lot of those things we said we would be doing for the people of Ontario. This is what the people of Ontario wanted us to do, and we are delivering on that. They want us to start repairing the damage of eight years of unabated attack, chaos, cuts and confrontation in all areas of our systems and those institutions that are very dear to everyone, to the people of Ontario, especially health care, education, the environment, clean air and clean water. Those are the things about which the people of Ontario said, "We want change, and we want you to deliver that change." I have to say that I'm very proud to be on this

side of the House with our leader, Dalton McGuinty, and a majority Liberal government. We are doing exactly what we said we would be doing, and we will continue to do that.

**1730**

What are some of those things that we said we would be doing and to which the people of Ontario said, "Yes, this is the change that we want to see"? Among many others, we have raised the minimum wage, which was untouched for many years. We have frozen tuition for universities. We have initiated new rent control so we can offer some assistance to the really needy. We have eliminated the private school tax credit, which we said we would and the people said, "You should." We must do it and we did it. We said we would freeze car insurance rates, and we have done that. We have begun the wonderful dialogue of meeting with the people to do better than what the previous government did. That is for all the people of Ontario.

We have said that we would roll back the corporate tax cuts and apply those in the most needy areas—that is, health care and education. We did that. We also said, yes, we'll raise tobacco taxes because it is an important area, especially for our health; not necessarily to raise taxes but it is for our health. We did that.

Are we being accused fairly of not delivering on those promises? Absolutely not. I believe we are entering an era of renewal, positive, of more confidence in this government, and this is what the people of Ontario want from their elected members. We are doing that today.

I think it's much more noble to say to our seniors, "You can go into a long-term-care home with the confidence that you will have a bed, that you will have assistance, that you will have care, that you will have a very clean environment," than to give another tax credit to those who don't need it. It's our responsibility to see that when our people say, "I need a hospital bed," that indeed you will have a hospital bed, that you will have a nurse, that you will have an emergency department that will receive you, that you don't have to be fearful that you may be redirected anywhere else in the city or, for that matter, anywhere else in the province.

There is much to say. It's a very important issue, and I want to give an opportunity to some other colleagues to respond to the motion that is on the floor today. Mr Speaker, I do thank you for the time that you have allowed. I want to say, congratulations on your appointment—so deserved.

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I will be very brief. I will not be supporting the opposition day motion.

What I'm most concerned about is that they want to have a referendum. I recall in my municipal days, back in 1997, when the city of Scarborough, the former city of Toronto, the city of East York and the city of North York were forced to amalgamate. Those cities held referendums at that time, and an overwhelming majority—over 70%—said no to the amalgamation. Yet the Conservative government of the day went ahead, amalgamated Toronto

and basically, in my view, did something that was extremely detrimental to the former cities of Scarborough, East York etc.

So I don't think that the Conservatives can speak today and ask for a referendum when they've ignored past referendums that have been overwhelmingly in one direction. That's something that they should think about before they put forward something of this nature.

**Mr McMeekin:** I'm pleased to join the debate too. The opposition resolution talks about bending the law at whim. I want to suggest that they're insisting on too strict a paradox, to insist that somebody else do something that they themselves couldn't do. The taxpayer protection legislation was routinely broken by that government. That's no admission in any sense that we're doing that. In fact, we were quite clear, concise and unambiguous when we filed our record of tax plans with the appropriate authorities.

The member from Whitby talks about being worthy of trust. I find that particularly ironic coming from a finance minister who—you know, there are two kinds of attention deficit disorders. There's the medical definition, and then there's the attention deficit disorder we saw repeatedly practised by that government. They spent so little attention on the deficit that we've got a cumulative disorder and a mess on our hands.

In the throne speech, you may recall, there was some reference to building a three-storey house. It would be irresponsible to put the third storey on without putting the fire out in the basement. I think we had a more serious problem there. I think we had something gnawing away at the very foundation of our economic well-being: these tiny, terrible, Tory termites who were eating the foundation of our well-being. It was quite tragic.

The philosophy on that side of the House was what could perhaps most clearly be characterized as the Reagan-Bush trickle-down theory—

**Mr Levac:** Voodoo.

**Mr McMeekin:** Yes, déjà voodoo economics. I suppose trickle-down would work if there weren't so many giant sponges at the top. That's one of the problems that we've had with that government and their friends over there.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with tax cuts. As the mayor of the only municipality—another amalgamated municipality, deputy whip—in all of Ontario that had the privilege of leading a council that reduced local taxes an unprecedented six years in a row, I can tell you, I share your concern about that issue.

Tax cuts make sense if three conditions are met: first of all, if you can afford it—that's pretty simple; you don't buy a new car if you can't afford it—secondly, if it doesn't hurt, destroy or denigrate public services; thirdly, and I think it's as important as the first two, if it narrows the gap between the richest of us and the rest of us.

**Mr Levac:** What happened?

**Mr McMeekin:** It certainly didn't happen over there. The gap has grown. We've got a \$5.6-billion mess on our hands, even before we start talking about Pickering and

the energy kerfuffle that we're in. Public services in some sectors are simply in chaos. Read the series of articles on nursing home concerns across the province. If that doesn't break your heart—the shameful arrogance and waste of energy in not moving forward there.

I want to conclude in the last few seconds I have by talking about the private school tax credit. When I was elected here and kind of wet behind the ears, the then Minister of Education came over and said to me, "Have you any concerns?" I said, "Well, this UN stuff on discrimination concerns me. When I was here in 1975 to 1977, we used to have a practice of creating select committees. Why don't you do that? We can look at all sorts of things—the affiliated school model. We don't have to pit community against community. There are other ways that we can go, other models that work." She said, "That's a great idea, but we're not going to do that because we're not going there." Then a little later on we discovered, sadly, the willingness to pit community against community. I stand in my place to say that we were clear, concise and unambiguous, and you've lost the moral authority on that side of the House to dare to put this kind of motion in this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** First, Speaker, I don't think I congratulated you on your new position. Congratulations.

I'm honoured, always, to speak in this House, to bring the views of my riding of London-Fanshawe. Definitely, I'm going to vote against the opposition day motion of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

**Interjection:** I'm shocked.

**Mr Ramal:** You shouldn't be shocked, because cancelling the tax credit for private schools was part of our promises. When we campaigned, we promised the people of Ontario that when we got elected we were going to cancel that tax credit. Then, on October 2, when we formed the government, we came here to start implementing our promises, to try to execute our promises. One of them was the tax credit for private schools.

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I know a lot of people are going to be upset about it. It's going to hurt some people across the province. But during the election we told the people of this province we were going to cancel it. I hope they take caution and take this issue into consideration, especially when we have a deficit of close to \$6 billion. We cannot afford to give tax credits to corporations, to private schools or to any institution with money we don't have.

In the meantime, because we are taking this action, our friends from the Conservative side are accusing us of breaking our promises. It's not promise breaking; it's implementing our promises. We promised and we are delivering right now. We would like to see this money invested in our health care and in our public education.

Last week, our Minister of Education went and spent about \$112 million to assist various schools across the province.

**Hon Mr Caplan:** Invested.



**Mr Ramal:** Yes, invested in our public education system to help newcomers to this province integrate and benefit our economy. It's a good step toward assisting our public education system in this province.

I get a lot of complaints from my constituents. They come to me and talk about health care, about the collapsing of health care. We want to implement our promises. We want to assist health care. We want to assist our public system. We want to put it into the shape and condition to be able to deliver, to be able to help our kids, to prepare our kids, the future generation.

**Interjection:** That's good.

**Mr Ramal:** Excellent. A constituent came to me last Monday and talked to me. He had brought the Star about nursing homes. His name was Andrew York. I guess he doesn't mind me mentioning his name. He has an aunt in a group home. His aunt has been neglected. When he listened to our health minister, he was so impressed. He said, "This kind of government, this kind of ministry, has our support and I hope my aunt will be treated better under this government." I think she will.

I want to assure all the people in London-Fanshawe and across the province that this government and our commitment will be delivered on time.

**Mr Miller:** I'm very pleased to join in the debate this afternoon, in the short time I have available, to support the opposition motion that's really highlighting how the Liberal government said one thing to get elected, and now that they're elected, they're doing something very differently. They're breaking their promises. That's what we're really highlighting today. In particular, a couple of big promises: that they wouldn't increase taxes, that they were going to balance the budget. Those are a couple key promises.

I distinctly remember hearing now Premier McGuinty, when he was running in the election, many times say, "I won't lower your taxes, but I won't raise them either." I think the people of Ontario believed that. I thought he was being straightforward when he made that statement. But now that they're the government, they're definitely not living up to that promise.

They've been breaking their promises and blaming it on what they call, the inherited Tory deficit, the \$5.6 billion. We call it the bogus deficit because, as is becoming clear, if they really wanted to balance the budget, they could do so.

In today's Toronto Sun, that is highlighted. There's an article, "What's the real deficit?" It's highlighting the fact that John Williamson, the Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, has looked at the deficit situation and notes:

"The Liberal government has overplayed its hand' and 'the Liberals are making the province's fiscal situation appear worse than it actually is.' Williamson said new data show that Ontario revenues will be up \$3 billion over earlier estimates, and that 'any deficit this year above \$600 million is a Liberal deficit.'

"Williamson's explanation is clear and concise.

"First, he notes, when former provincial auditor Erik Peters prepared his estimate of a \$5.6-billion deficit this year for McGuinty," it was based on the earlier predictions of, I think, a 1.8% growth rate. "But they didn't take into account what is now expected to be a \$3-billion surge in government revenues this year, due both to an improving economy and more cash from Ottawa.

"Second, McGuinty said in his election platform last May that he could deal with what he described ... as a \$2-billion 'hidden' Tory deficit and still balance the books." That's \$5 billion. You add the \$3 billion and the \$2 billion together and that's \$5 billion. That leaves \$600 million, and we have four months left in the financial year to balance the budget.

The other key broken promise that I think really negatively affects northern Ontario, my area, is increasing taxes. You know that Ontario businesses will be paying 27% higher taxes than they would have had we been the government January 1, 2004. I think that is really key, and it's a bad thing. Businesses are making decisions every day about investment, about whether to increase production, and they take into account all the costs of doing business, whether it be their electricity price, which this government has put up 28%, or their taxes, which this government is putting up 28%, and all the various components of a business decision. I met with one company from my riding this morning that's going through that very process. I think it can do a lot of damage.

I don't have much time, so I'm going to leave some time for the member for York North to finish up. I'd just like to see this government honour at least two promises: the promise to not increase taxes and the promise to balance the budget. For that, I would like to support this resolution this afternoon. I'll leave the balance of the time to the member for York North.

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to make a few closing remarks about the resolution we are debating here today. I want to make it clear that I will be supporting this resolution. In the time I have available, I'd like to concentrate on one particular aspect of this resolution, and that is the one that deals with the equity in education tax credit.

This tax credit is something that the families of 100,000 students in this province have understood to be available to them. Something that I think attention needs to be drawn to again is the fact that most of the families who would benefit from this are in fact those families of hard-working, modest income. Much has been made to suggest that it can be for people who would otherwise not need a tax credit, people who are of substantial means but, in fact, Statistics Canada demonstrates to us that, no, it is those of modest income.

The independent schools have a tradition of being able to provide opportunities for families where a special focus may be needed or required by the particular family. I think it is particularly unfortunate that this government has chosen to make it retroactive. Those even outside the

independent school community have recognized how unfair it is for those families who would have made financial decisions that now appear to have been made in error by the fact that this has now been made retroactive. It's also a very dangerous precedent for this government to set with regard to other possible sectors that might face this same kind of instability. I think it's most regrettable that, while this government promised to remove this tax credit, they did not indicate that they would be making it retroactive.

In the moments that remain, I think there are a couple of things that need to be addressed here in supporting this motion: first of all the danger of the retroactivity; the danger of setting a precedent, the instability that comes with that; and the fact that there have been broken promises, certainly in the area of the P3 hospitals and in the area of eliminating the hydro cap. These are all things that set a tenor for this government, one that suggests cynicism for the people of Ontario. I think this is a dangerous precedent for this government to embark on.

I would also suggest that it is most unfortunate that we are here today looking at a resolution that reveals that kind of potential for cynicism, when we look at voter apathy and the need to embark on government and public office with greater integrity. What we're looking at today, then, are promises that aren't being kept and a punitive kind of response to the equity in education act.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time for debate has expired.

Mr Eves has moved opposition day number 1.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Will all those in favour please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Eves, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Faherty, Jim	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John

**The Deputy Speaker:** Will all those opposed please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

### Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Peterson, Tim
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 21; the nays are 66.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1805.*



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	<b>Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie</b> (L) Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	<b>Tascona, Joseph N.</b> (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		
Beaches-East York /	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-York-Est		Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	<b>Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona</b> (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)		
Springdale		Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kingston and the Islands /	<b>Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga		Kingston et les îles	
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London North Centre /	Matthews, Deborah (L)
		London Centre-Nord	
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London West / -Ouest	<b>Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher</b> (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Grey		Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	<b>Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S.</b> (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)		
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		Mississauga South / -Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Essex	<b>Crozier, Bruce</b> (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
		Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa South / -Sud	<b>McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton</b> (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
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Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	<b>Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine</b> (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	<b>Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George</b> (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	<b>Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg</b> (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	<b>Arnott, Ted</b> (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
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St Paul's	<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael</b> (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro,  
Norm Miller, David Oraziotti,  
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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Khalil Ramal  
Bob Delaney, Rosario Marchese, Jerry Martiniuk,  
Ted McMeekin, Phil McNeely, Carol Mitchell, Bill Murdoch,  
Khalil Ramal, Tony Ruprecht, Tony C. Wong  
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

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(Hansard)**

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des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Thursday 11 December 2003**

**Jeudi 11 décembre 2003**

**Speaker**  
**Honourable Alvin Curling**

**Clerk**  
**Claude L. DesRosiers**

**Président**  
**L'honorable Alvin Curling**

**Greffier**  
**Claude L. DesRosiers**





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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1000.  
Prayers.*

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### DEBT RETIREMENT PLAN

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** I move that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should commit itself to a 25-year debt retirement plan, articulating five-year interim targets, such that the province of Ontario is free from its net debt by the fiscal year 2029-30.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Mr Arnott has moved private member's notice of motion number 1. Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

**Mr Arnott:** "We in Wellington understand the economic value of hard work and the social value of personal responsibility. From this understanding stems a serious concern when our government refuses to live within its means, when our government grows until it begins to inhibit overall economic growth, when even excessive taxation does not prevent the expansion of government debt."

The words I just quoted are as relevant today as when I first delivered them during my maiden speech in the Legislature 13 years ago this very month. We all remember those days. That was back when the New Democratic Party of Ontario governed with a huge majority in this House, as they embarked upon five years of disastrous fiscal policy, bringing the province to the brink of bankruptcy.

A great deal has changed in 13 years. Financial irresponsibility was replaced in 1995 with financial prudence. Under successive Conservative governments, there were four balanced budgets in a row, the greatest record of sustained fiscal discipline in Ontario since World War I. Today, with the results of the October election still reverberating through this House, we seem to be starting again down the slippery slope of financial recklessness under this new Liberal government.

My riding has changed since 1990. Since the election of 1999, I've been honoured to say, "we in Waterloo-Wellington," when I advocate for the interests of my constituents and the communities I'm so privileged to represent. In the recent provincial election, I made clear

to my constituents that paying down the provincial debt should be made a priority and that I would continue to advocate in favour of a concrete long-term plan to make Ontario debt-free.

This is the basis for my resolution today, stating, "that in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should commit itself to a 25-year debt retirement plan." This resolution represents not only the firm beliefs held by many in Waterloo-Wellington but throughout the entire province. Those beliefs include the need to pay what is due and make a small but necessary sacrifice today, to improve the lives of our children and grandchildren in the future, leaving them with a higher standard of living and even more opportunities than we enjoy today. To do otherwise would be to pass an overwhelming financial burden on to the next generation, and to do so is simply unacceptable to me.

The need to commit to a concrete plan of action to eliminate the debt is sound fiscal policy and makes good economic sense to most people. It is a view that is shared by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, an organization that, as we know, exists to advocate on behalf of taxpayers. In a letter endorsing my resolution, the Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, John Williamson, has outlined the problem in terms of how our provincial debt, now estimated to be more than \$118 billion, and the interest costs on that debt, tie the hands of government in terms of keeping taxes at the right level and paying for social programs.

He wrote: "While there are many short-term spending pressures on government, lawmakers should consider this: The province will spend \$8.6 billion this year on interest payments to service the accumulated debt. If there was no provincial debt and no interest to pay on it, provincial income tax could be reduced by 44%—without a corresponding reduction in program spending. Alternatively, the health care budget could be increased by 30%. Ontario's high debt load has resulted in higher taxes and restricted program spending options." He also wrote: "This motion is an important initiative and deserves the support of all members of provincial Parliament."

The Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce has also supported making debt retirement a higher priority. Chamber president Todd Letts has written the following in support of my initiative: "I commend you on your intention to introduce a private member's resolution calling for the government to balance their budget in this current fiscal year and enact a 25-year



plan to retire the debt beginning with the coming fiscal year."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, a voice for small business, surveyed their membership recently and found that in Ontario there was a whopping 84% in favour of a new, strong provincial debt repayment target.

Support for this idea continues to grow, because it makes good economic sense and is based on proven fiscal principles that are being applied in other Canadian jurisdictions that have already enacted debt retirement plans. For example, in the province of Alberta, which of course is governed by the Progressive Conservatives, they committed to such a plan in 1995 and they have achieved a 78% reduction in their accumulated debt over a seven-year period. That's a reduction from about \$21 billion in 1994-95 to \$4.7 billion last fiscal year. Alberta has legislated a specific debt reduction program, outlined in their Fiscal Responsibility Act, and from what I understand they're approximately 10 years ahead of schedule.

The province of Manitoba, currently governed by the NDP, has a long-term plan to pay off their debt by 2040. In 2003 they announced a fourth consecutive payment of \$96 million against their debt and pension liabilities, and as of 2002 they were four years ahead of their schedule.

So we see that the idea of debt retirement is supported across the political spectrum. We have Conservative Alberta and NDP Manitoba, both with governments that are proceeding with long-term debt retirement plans, paying down their debts.

I look forward to hearing presentations from both sides of the House from members of all three parties, but I hope to address in advance some of the issues members might wish to raise in this morning's debate. We might hear talk of a Liberal deficit this year in Ontario, and some might say we can't look at paying down the debt because there is a belief, however inaccurate, that the current government inherited a considerable deficit. My belief is that the Liberal government can and should balance their budget this year. The member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey has offered a road map on how they can do it. Then, as spelled out in this resolution, they should enact a 25-year plan to retire the debt starting next fiscal year. I reiterate: The Conservative government balanced the budget four years in a row, from 1999 to 2003.

Despite the outcome of this election, not once have I heard a constituent tell me that it's time to revert to the days of uncontrolled spending, tax hikes and deficits that were the order of the day in the 1980s and early 1990s. Voters today will not tolerate the cynical and all-too-familiar gamesmanship of a new government saying they are shocked and appalled at the books they are responsible to manage in the public interest.

When it comes to the Liberals' characterization of the state of Ontario's finances, there appears to be far more in the way of political strategy than substance. I say that the government has a deliberate political strategy to

inflate and exaggerate the size of the deficit to try to dampen expectations on their spending promises and leave the back door open so they can tax and spend like there's no tomorrow. They are trying to create a crisis. What they need to do, and what I think Ontarians expect them to do, is to demonstrate leadership, show that they have a vision for the future, balance the budget, and listen to the people of Ontario who are concerned about how much debt they are passing on and how expensive and counterproductive the interest payments are. If they do, and if they care about fiscal prudence, they will wholeheartedly commit to getting rid of that debt in our lifetime.

**1010**

There are perhaps others who would try to point the finger back and claim that the previous government could have done more to pay off the debt. I want to address that point as well.

Some members will recall my previous resolution debated here October 9, 1997, calling upon the previous government to pay down the debt in 25 years with five-year interim targets. That resolution passed with support from both sides of the House. In 1999 the Harris government committed in the blueprint election platform to pay down \$2 billion of provincial debt. That goal was increased to \$5 billion in our first budget of our second majority government. The government announced it would achieve that target earlier this year. In the fall election the Conservative Party committed to paying down \$5 billion over five years, if re-elected. Since the last time the House debated this initiative, it's fair to say that there has been considerable action taken on the debt.

The next step is to fully recognize that we need to do the same thing that families do. Many achieve home ownership, burning their mortgages, by paying off the interest and principal in about 25 years or sooner if their budget permits. Others could try to assert that a 25-year plan is too ambitious, too expensive. To that I would simply say, if we don't establish a goal, we'll never solve the problem. It is far better to recognize the problem, set a goal and try to achieve it, than to ignore and just hope that somehow it will go away.

There may be some who don't care if we ever pay down the debt and there may be some who try to muddy the waters with talk about the debt being OK because our economy will grow anyway and the debt-to-GDP ratio will diminish or perhaps stay the same. To that call to inaction, I say nonsense. We should never be spending something like \$8 billion to \$9 billion in interest payments on the debt. The failure to commit to a debt retirement plan by any government of any political stripe simply puts the province at a risk of a higher and more expensive debt down the road.

This problem was created by governments of all stripes. I think all MPPs should become part of the solution by supporting the measures spelled out in my resolution and committing to make Ontario debt-free. I look forward to the debate this morning.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nickel Belt has five minutes.



**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I listened with great interest to the comments made by the member from Waterloo-Wellington, and I've got to tell him that the people in my riding—when we talk about a financial burden being passed down to kids—are far more concerned about the after-effects and the consequences of your government's fiscal policy, which included irresponsible tax cuts, deficit reduction measures which were extreme and a downloading on to municipalities and the resulting social burden that has now been passed down to our kids, which our kids are going to feel for years and years. That's what people in my riding are worried about—the impacts of your policies when you were in government and the social deficit that my kids and everybody else's kids and the kids to come in future generations now have to deal with.

Let me give you some examples of that social deficit. We have 37,000 kids in Ontario who need special education in our public school system, thanks to the cuts to education that were made by your government. How do you explain that those kids are falling further and further behind? If they don't get the remedial help that they need, they are going to be dropping out of school, they are going to be in trouble with the law, and they'll never be able to fully contribute to Ontario economic life. That's part of your fiscal policy. Or the 12,000 kids who are on a waiting list now for children's mental health services, because of your fiscal policy which was more interested in tax cuts and cutting social programs to finance those tax cuts for the rich and famous. Those of us who were at the presentation this week by Susan Hess heard how devastating, how detrimental that has been for so many Ontario families and is going to continue to be, because now we need to try to find that money to reinvest.

Look at the cuts that were made to home care by the Conservative government. In our part of the world, we've had many, many restrictions by the Conservative-appointed CCAC board which has left hundreds of elderly and the disabled having no choice but to go into long-term-care facilities. These are seniors who, with a little bit of support at home, with homemaking services, laundry and home care, could be able to remain in their own homes with dignity. But because of the cuts that the Conservatives made with respect to their fiscal policy on home care, they're being forced into long-term-care facilities. And we all read the stories that were highlighted last week about how terrible so many of those facilities are in terms of the care, or lack of care, that they're providing to seniors. That goes back to this government's fiscal policy.

Look at the cuts that were made to high-quality, regulated child care by this government: \$43 less per child for regulated space than when we were the government in 1995. And what does that mean? Ontario parents are now paying the highest cost for regulated child care anywhere in Canada. We also know that 70% of Ontario women who work outside the home and have kids under the age of 12, only 8% of those can actually

access high-quality child care, again, because of the fiscal policies of the former government.

For example, look at the fact that ODSP payments have been frozen for eight years because this government was more interested in tax cuts and dealing with the deficit than it was in ensuring that some of the most vulnerable Ontarians, disabled Ontarians, could actually have an adequate standard of living. They're now living below the poverty line in the province. Never mind the terrible cuts that were made to people living on social assistance: a 22% cut in the first year of this government's mandate. Those people have been frozen ever since. We affected 400,000 kids by that cut.

Then we look at the mess at the Family Responsibility Office, done again because this government was more interested in finding money for its tax cuts and dealing with a deficit overnight than they were ever interested in ensuring that they met their obligation to ensure that women and children received the support payments that they are legally entitled to. We've got \$1.3 billion now owing to women and children, thanks to the mess that the Conservative government made at the Family Responsibility Office.

I say to the member, you want to talk about a burden? The burden results from the social deficit inflicted on the province by your government over eight years. We'll have lots of kids who will pay a long time for that social deficit. That's the shame of it. That's the burden that I'm much more worried about addressing.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** I join the debate on the motion brought forward by the member for Waterloo-Wellington. It's a well-meaning motion. It would deserve some wonderful attention, because I think it's the intent of every member of the House to have a government that doesn't run into any debt or deficit. As well-meaning as it is, we have seen the action of the past government, and if we are in a situation today where either programs will have to be deferred, or cut, if you will, cut, it's because of the total mismanagement of the former government. It has left the people of Ontario some \$6 billion in debt, or we should say, unbalanced budget, let alone the debt, because in the last eight years we have seen some \$20 million to \$24 million added on to Ontario's total debt. Of course we will be paying that. If it's not us, on top of what they have left us, our kids will be paying for that.

**1020**

As the government, we are repeating today what our leader was saying during the election. It's refreshing to hear the member for Waterloo-Wellington repeating the exact same phrase that Dalton McGuinty has been saying in the House as Premier—and while he was campaigning—that the government must live within its means. I know that the member understands that and I know he's well-meaning, but unfortunately he was part of a government and leadership that absolutely neglected what was in the best interests of the people of Ontario. Does it make sense to have a balanced budget when year after year we have to sell Ontario's interests to balance the books? I don't think so. With just one sale alone of those



assets, and I'm speaking now of the 407, our kids will have to pay for the total mismanagement of the government. Can you believe that? The 407—

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** Come on, Mario. That's not so.

**Mr Sergio:** Well, you tell me, my friends. I respect your views, but 99 years—the sale of the 407. Don't tell me otherwise, because you know it and we know it, and the people of Ontario know it: We will be paying for your total mismanagement. A 99-year lease—unheard of. I wonder what the heck they would have sold next to balance the books. They couldn't have done it even with selling other assets.

Guys, give me a break. We are not here to play politics when it touches the lives of the people of Ontario. I think the intent is well-meant that we should have in 25 years—I would say we should have Ontario free of debt today, let alone in 2029 and 2030. I think the people of Ontario deserve that, but we are paying now. If you look at your hydro bills, what do you pay? We are paying our share of \$38 billion. Who is paying for that? Why are we paying for that?

I think Dalton McGuinty is right on track when he says that we will have to live within our means, and now, to correct some of the previous government's mistakes, we will have to take action. He's doing well. He's speaking the people's language. He's doing what the people told him to do. And if we cannot live within our means, it means we are neglectful and we are not doing what the people told us to do.

Let's not find excuses. Even the members from the other side are well-intentioned and well-meaning members, but they have to face the reality today. We are facing that reality for you and for the rest of the people of Ontario, and we will take the necessary action to correct some of those horrendous mistakes, the chaos and misunderstanding you have created among the people of Ontario, and very true today.

I'll pass the torch, if you will, for the next five minutes to other members of the House because I think they want to express their views as well.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It's in rotation, so the member for Kitchener-Waterloo.

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** I'm very pleased to join this debate today. I very strongly support the resolution that has been put forward by the member from Waterloo-Wellington. He is putting forward the concept of finally tackling the provincial debt with a very concrete 25-year plan to make this province totally debt-free. I support this. I have always supported this, unlike some of the people who may be speaking today, who did support it at one time and are not prepared to support it today.

I think anyone can agree that between 1985 and 1995 we went through a period of tax-and-spend. When our government was elected, we made a commitment that we would balance the budget and we would tackle the debt. I'm very pleased to say we have done both. We were very successful in balancing the budget four times in a

row between 1999 to 2003, which was unheard of in this province since World War I. I'm also pleased to say that we started paying down the debt. However, I think this motion today is particularly important because I fear for the future of our children and our grandchildren as I see the new Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty embarking on a path of tax-and-spend, which will only increase the debt and will take us back into a position of deficit.

At the present time we know that the Liberal government has done everything they possibly can in order to exaggerate and create a bogus deficit. They are only doing this because they are trying to make excuses for the fact that they know they cannot deliver on their promises. We knew they couldn't deliver on their promises. As a former Minister of Education, when a commitment was made to cap class size at 20, I knew that it was going to cost \$1 billion to do so. Yet they continue to make promises. However, I've noticed they're not talking about it.

They're also making excuses about other promises which we don't hear about any more. They talked about 8,000 more nurses; they talked about more hospital beds; they talked about more doctors. The list goes on and on and on. So, recognizing that they couldn't deliver on their promises, and continuing to break their promises day after day after day, whether it's on the moraine, housing, P3, hydro or whether it's auto insurance, they now continue to do everything they can to create this bogus deficit.

It's a deficit that we faced as well, in 1995. But I can tell you, our team, our cabinet, under the leadership of our finance minister, Mr Eves, got to work and started reducing that deficit, and as I say, we were able to balance the budget in 1999. It took a lot of determination; it took a lot of grit. There were difficult decisions that needed to be made, but I am not prepared to see my children and my grandchildren have a situation where we have even more debt in the province of Ontario.

My colleague is well supported in his resolution by groups such as the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and of course the chamber of commerce. All of these groups recognize the need for fiscal prudence. If we take a look at the letter that Mr Arnott received from Mr Williamson, he says that retiring this debt is extremely important. He says, "Regrettably, many politicians"—I think he's now thinking about the Liberal government; I think he rues the day that he supported them—"prefer to tax and spend without giving much thought to ensuring the debt is not passed on to the next generation of taxpayers."

In his letter he also says that this year we're going to be spending \$8.6 billion on interest payments. He says—and this is what's so important and this is why I would encourage the Liberal members to seriously consider this resolution—if we didn't have a debt, a debt that we started to pay down, and if we didn't have the interest, we could actually reduce the provincial income tax by 44%. He also says that the health care budget could be increased by 30%.



Our debt today is creating higher taxes; it is restricting our program spending. If you had this money available, you could actually move forward with your broken promises of 8,000 more nurses and doctors and hospital beds. The amount of money that we're spending in interest on the debt today—if it is, as Mr Williamson says, \$8.6 billion—is about the amount of that we give to our hospitals. Think of it: We could be giving more money to hospitals; we could be giving more money to children's aid; we could be giving more money to schools. The list goes on and on and on.

So I very strongly support the resolution that has been put forward by the Waterloo-Wellington MPP, Ted Arnott. I hope that members of all sides will support this resolution and that they will seriously consider the impact it's going to have on their children and their grandchildren if we don't take action. I hope they will remember that this is a problem that was created by all governments of all stripes. It wasn't just Liberals or NDP or Conservatives. We, collectively, have created this problem, and I believe it's very important today that we give serious consideration that we do what Alberta has done under a Conservative government, do what Manitoba has done under an NDP government, and move this recommendation for this debt retirement plan. I would hope for the support of everyone in this House.

1030

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Timmins-James Bay has up to five minutes.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** My good friend Mr Arnott and I were having a chat sometime earlier this fall, and he said to me, "Gilles, I really am a right winger. Quite frankly, I'm extremely right-wing." I've always seen Mr Arnott as a bit of a moderate, but I really see by way of this motion that he means what he says. If I look back to the motions this particular member has brought before this House, they've been on a bit of a right-wing edge. For example, in the last Parliament, we dealt with the double-hatter bill, where he basically wanted to change the current system to allow professional firefighters to volunteer in volunteer fire departments and break collective agreements of firefighters in this province. Now he brings forward a bill where he says, "I want to put in place, by way of a motion, a law that would basically say the government has a debt retirement plan of 25 years."

Well, the first thing I've got to say to my good friend Mr Arnott is, where were you for the last eight years? These guys were the government, right? Aren't they the guys who were the government of the province of Ontario from 1995 to 2003, the fiscal managers, as they tried to make themselves out to be? The Conservatives came to government and said, "We're going to get things in order. We're going to bring things under control. We're great fiscal managers."

My first point is, why did this not show up in the last eight years? The member had an opportunity, while he was in government, to whisper in the ear of the Premier and of the cabinet that such an idea was a good one. And

if it was a good idea for the Tories, I think they would have done it. So I just find it a little bit interesting that he brings this forward after the Conservatives were defeated, that he all of a sudden now wants to bring forward a motion that says they want to put together a debt retirement scheme. When you guys were the government, you certainly didn't have one. You obviously didn't want to put one in place, because you didn't adopt this idea when you were the government. For you to come forward now and ask this Parliament to do this, when you're in opposition—I just find it a little bit interesting.

I don't want to repeat everything my friend from Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, said, but I want to echo and say ditto to everything she said. The Tory government, while they were in place from 1995 to 2003, quite frankly created a social deficit in this province that we're still trying to recover from. For example, take a look at the people on disability pensions in this province. They have not had an increase since the Tories came to government in 1995. People have been falling farther and farther behind, all because that government, the Conservative government, wanted to pass on tax cuts to the wealthiest people in this province. I think that was wrong. I think it was mean-spirited. I think we were targeting the wrong people when it came to assistance. A person like me, who makes \$85,000 or \$90,000 a year, hardly needs a tax cut and a few extra bucks in my pocket compared to somebody who's on a disability pension through no fault of their own, by virtue of being ill and not being able to work having to live in poverty. I say that's one heck of a social deficit.

I look at the kids in our school system. My good friend Madame Martel again raised yesterday in this House the whole issue of children with autism and the money that needs to be invested to make sure that kids after six years of age are able to get the kind of services they need.

I look at kids in schools in my riding—I'm sure you have them in all of yours—who have special needs. A particular child I'm dealing with now, in grade 4, has severe problems, severe behavioural problems, and it has got to the point where the school board has had to evict the child from the school. Why? Because they don't have the money to be able to deal with that child. I'm sure the school board doesn't do this lightly and they don't want to do it just to be mean to the child, but the child is very hard to deal with and they have no resources to deal with that child while the child is in the classroom.

So I say to the member, Mr Arnott, you'd have been better off trying to make sure we reinforce the services that are important to people in this province. Once you've got that in place, then maybe we can talk about your motion.

I come back to my first point: You had an opportunity to do this when you were in government, and you didn't do it; instead what you've done is created a social deficit in this province that we're still trying to dig ourselves out from under.

My last point, in the last few seconds I have, is—and I know Liberals will get up and say, "That's why we're in



a mess. The Tories left us a big surprise”—that there were no surprises. We all knew, going into the last election, that there would be at least a \$5-billion deficit. Mr Phillips, who sat on the estimates committee with me last spring, repeated over and over again to Minister Ecker, the Minister of Finance of the day, “You’re going to have at least a \$5-billion deficit, if not more.” We knew that, so don’t get up in this House this morning and say, “Surprise, we’ve got a deficit,” because it was no surprise. It might have been in your minds, but it wasn’t in anybody else’s.

**Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** It is my pleasure to rise and add my comments on this motion, “That ... the government of Ontario should commit itself to a 25-year debt retirement plan, articulating five-year interim targets, such that the province of Ontario is free from ... debt by the fiscal year 2029-30.”

I’d like to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for bringing this item forward. It provides an opportunity for this Liberal government to address in this House once again the central issue facing this government and facing the people of Ontario.

On the surface it certainly seems like a good idea. I don’t think you could show me a politician, I don’t think you could show me a political party—certainly I don’t think we’ll find one in this House—that doesn’t think debt retirement is a good idea. We all know too well how debt and the interest on that debt can compromise our ability to provide a level of service and the kinds of services to the people of Ontario—services they want and services they expect.

But like most things that are done in this House, it is a question of timing. We all know that at this time the Liberal government of Ontario has a \$5.6-billion deficit, and that’s a whole bunch of reasons why this item is not a good idea at this time. We all understand how the fiscal mismanagement that has occurred here in recent times has curtailed the ability of this government to move forward in the manner it would like.

I’m sure the irony of this item is not lost on anyone. Mr Peters has stated clearly that we have a \$5.6-billion problem that occurred under the watch of the previous Tory government. I think it bears repeating that this is not my number, it’s not a Liberal number, it’s not a number produced by any ministry under the Liberal government; this is a number produced by the former Provincial Auditor of Ontario.

Let’s talk about debt for a little while; not the \$5.6-billion deficit but the debt left by the previous Tory government. At a time when, by most accounts, the economy of Ontario was performing relatively well—and of course the provincial treasury is the beneficiary of that—they still found it necessary to sell off billions of dollars of government assets, and of course the government of Ontario would be the beneficiary of that. Under these circumstances, they still managed to add over \$20 billion to the total provincial debt.

We have talked a lot about the deficit in this chamber, but I’m not sure how many people in the province are

aware that \$20 billion or more has been added to the total debt by the former Tory government, which the taxpayers of the province are now responsible for, and during tenure how the interest expense on that debt has further compromised our ability to provide services to the people of this province. As all of us here know, that \$20 billion in debt does not even begin to include what has happened under the watch of the former Tory government as it relates to hydro and the accumulation of the debt there. We all know there’s only one taxpayer, and certainly we all understand that that responsibility lies with that taxpayer. So I think we have to ask ourselves why a member of the former Tory government would bring this item forward at this time.

You know, a lot of people who would consistently support a Tory candidate would likely do so because they believe Conservatives could fiscally manage this province better than any other party. But now we know that is not so, not just because we found out about a \$5.6-billion deficit—independently provided—but because we also know that during approximately eight years of Tory government they added \$20 billion or more to the debt, and annual interest payments in the multi-millions.

Maybe that’s our answer. Maybe that’s why this item has been brought forward at this time. Perhaps it’s an attempt to begin rebuilding an image of good fiscal management. Perhaps it’s an attempt to go public and beat their chests and say Liberals won’t support or aren’t in favour of debt retirement. I say to the honourable member opposite: Good try, but it’s too late; the bluff’s been called, and the game is up.

**1040**

Just yesterday, we had a vote looking for a referendum on Bill 2. We just had one. It happened on October 2 and lasted 30 days. We call it an election. The people of Ontario were listening, they were paying attention, and this time they called the bluff. The cards of the previous Tory government have been laid on the table for all of us to see, and it’s not a good-looking hand. The people of Ontario have allowed us to reveal the true state of the finances in this province.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I’m very pleased to join the debate this morning on the resolution proposed by Mr Arnott, “That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should commit itself to a 25-year debt retirement plan, articulating five-year interim targets, such that the province of Ontario is free from its net debt by the fiscal year 2029-30.”

We all know that Mr Arnott, the member from Waterloo-Wellington, is a hard-working, sincere and dedicated member of this Legislature. He’s a very responsible person. He’s looking out for his riding and his constituents, and this is an initiative that’s based on responsibility. This resolution is about the Ontario government taking on a plan to deal with our long-term debt. It is about the government acting responsibly to deal with our debt.

Think of the Ontario government’s debt, some \$118.7 billion, as a big mortgage on our home, Ontario. Individ-



idual Ontarians deal with their home mortgages in a responsible way. They make their mortgage payments, and over 20 or 25 years they pay off their debt. It's time for the Ontario government to do the same thing.

Think of all the tax dollars currently going to service the interest on \$118.7 billion. By my quick calculation, that's about \$8 billion—I see the taxpayers' federation says it's \$8.6 billion. That \$8 billion to \$9 billion could be spent on health care, education or environmental measures, or it could be given back to the taxpayers of Ontario. That would be a 44% reduction in income tax or a 30% increase in health spending.

We now have a new government in Ontario. Mr McGuinty stated many times in the election, "I won't lower your taxes, but I won't raise them either." Mr McGuinty signed and pledged with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that he would balance the budget. He's saying he wouldn't raise taxes. So why are we seeing a 27% increase in business taxes in this province? That's something that worries me more than anything, and the effect that will have on business in Ontario.

When we were in government, my colleagues would often talk about tax-and-spend Liberals. I was new to the place, and I thought they were kidding. This government is quickly showing they are indeed tax-and-spend Liberals. That's why this resolution is more important than ever. We need a long-term plan to deal with our debt. It is too easy to give in to short-term spending demands and act irresponsibly with regard to spending.

Let me be clear: It is our children and our grandchildren who will suffer if this government does not act responsibly. It's short-term pain for long-term gain. I very much support this resolution. I believe it's the right thing to do. It's tough for governments that live on a four-year cycle to look 25 years down the road, but it is the best thing to do for all Ontarians. I would like to see the government adopt this strategy.

**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** I'm very happy to rise on this motion, and I want to spend a few minutes speaking about how we got here—the kind of thinking that got us here and what this government is going to do to move forward.

No one can dispute the need, the virtue and the importance of retiring debt. No one can dispute the burden that provincial debt places on future generations. No one can dispute, certainly, that to the extent we are saddled with debt, we can't meet our promises and don't have the ability to fund our programs.

But first, I want to share with the House some information about the status of our debt. Our net debt as of March 31, 2003, was \$132.6 billion, and the interest last year alone on that debt was \$9.7 billion. As my friend has said, the Tories actually increased the provincial debt by some \$30 billion while they were in office. The cost of servicing that increased debt rose as well, from \$8 billion to \$11 billion per year. Every year during the Tory regime, one sixth of the provincial budget was spent servicing the province's debt. That is not a record to be proud of.

Here in Ontario, previous governments have also let the debt more than double. The NDP government let it double from \$38 billion to \$101 billion during their time in office. And we are paying a price for the increases by those past governments. It is not a situation to be proud of. To incur our debt is to mortgage our future. Not only have we been left with a financial debt, my friends, we have been left with a debt and a legacy in terms of mis-managed government.

Mismanagement leads to debt, and we're here to fix it. On October 2, the people of this province voted for the straight goods. They voted against Magna budgets, they voted against accounting tricks, they voted against sweeping it under the rug and they voted to listen to a Provincial Auditor instead of questioning his motives and judgments to act. They voted for respect, openness and transparency in the books of this province, something that has been sorely missing for the past eight years.

*Interjections.*

**Ms Broten:** Do you know what? We've already taken a number of initiatives to move forward—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. Just take a second. Members more and more seem to think that they have the right to speak when somebody has the floor, and I think we'd like to change that around here, so I'd appreciate it if you'd listen to the speaker who has the floor.

**Ms Broten:** Thank you. We certainly need to address the deficit and the debt. There's no doubt about that, and we are moving forward in that regard.

The setting of targets is an admirable goal, but I want to ask you how, right now, 28.4% of GDP is being used for servicing the debt. Before the days of the Tories and the NDP it was less than half. But remember, it took a long time to build up this debt and, unfortunately, it's going to take a long time to pay it down.

I know that the Minister of Finance will have more to say about this when he does his economic statement, but I also want to just spend my last remaining moments talking about the deficit in public services and public safety that this province has also suffered over the last number of years. We need to set timetables and we need to have targets for paying down the deficit. But let me ask my friends across the House, where were the five-year targets when it came to improving our health care system and our education system? Where were the targets when it came to fixing our water and improving our air? Where were the targets to ensure that the Family Responsibility Office phone got answered when the people in our communities were calling for help? Where were the targets when it came to ensuring that hospital beds were open and available?

Is it time for Mr Arnott's motion? No. It's time to restore the fiscal situation to a balance. It's time to have openness and transparency in government books so we can ensure that we reverse the deficits in public health and safety. That's the direction we're taking in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nepean-Carleton now has the floor.



**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Mr Speaker, I watched you over the last eight years in this place, and I listened and I learned. We're going to be an effective opposition because of all we learned from you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague from Waterloo-Wellington. I think his resolution is important. I strongly believe in balanced budgets. I strongly believe in debt repayment. I think he has presented a responsible resolution, and I would encourage all members of the House to support it.

This is a rather serious issue. I do think it's important. This is private members' hour and we should be speaking as individual members. In all honesty, and I won't mention which members, but we shouldn't be reading speeches that the minister's office wrote for us. This should be a time when it's non-political and we speak to the question before us. I listened to two speakers and neither of them even said whether they would support the resolution or not. We want to make this place more relevant and we want people to come and tell us what their constituents think on these issues—what they think, not what the canned speeches from the whiz kids in Greg Sorbara's office or the Premier's office say.

1050

I listened with great interest to Mr Mauro and Ms Broten talk about the \$20 billion of interest that was added by this government. That \$20 billion is funny because it's identical to the number that Lyn McLeod in 1995 said she would have to borrow before she balanced the budget. Lyn McLeod agreed with Mike Harris that you couldn't come in and cut \$11 billion in spending like that, that you had to do it in a responsible way. So the Liberal and the Tory plan, had Lyn McLeod been elected and undertaken her economic strategy, would have added \$20 billion to the debt; exactly the same. I suppose Greg Sorbara's office or the Premier's office didn't tell you that. It's interesting. I think that's important to mention. We balanced the budget responsibly over four years, exactly like the Liberal Party said they would. And I say this quite sincerely: Don't fall into the trap of the spin doctors.

I do think it's fair to admit that all three political parties over the last 30 or 40 years—Conservative, Liberal and New Democrat—including the government that I served in, had to borrow money. I think it's self-evident that that happened. I don't think any of us should be proud of that. I think if there were three people responsible, it would be all three parties.

The question that Mr Arnott is asking today is should we all not, collectively, take responsibility—particularly, I say to the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Thunder Bay, as younger members in this place—for the problem and come forward with a plan to balance the budget and pay off the debt? That's what this resolution seeks to do. I think it's important. If we could set a 25-year plan to reasonably pay off the deficit, I think that would be a good thing.

But I do think it's remarkable. There's no doubt the province is facing some significant challenges this fiscal

year. All we're saying to the government is surely there would be a million dollars out of a \$70-million budget where the government—just \$1 million out of \$8 billion—could say, "Do you know what? We're going to cut spending by \$1 million." We're going to do something. We're not going to take the \$5.6 billion number. It's sort of like driving a car and you know you're going to drive off a cliff in six months from now, on April 1—and you were elected on October 2—but we can't do anything. There's not a single thing we can do.

We came forward with about \$10 billion worth of ideas, and I have no problem with your saying 90% or 95% of those are unworkable, that it can't be done. We'll disagree. But surely there must be one single thing where you could say, "Do you know what? We can take that \$771 million and count it in this fiscal year," as John Manley says. That's not John Baird talking; that's John Manley. Surely we could take that \$330 million of SARS money and say we're going to deduct that right off the \$5.6-billion financial challenge we're facing.

I asked in question period. The Liberal candidates ran on a plan saying, "We have set aside \$2 billion to deal with the potential deficit." David Hall, who verified the plan, said that you can cut that off the deficit. The members won't look at me when I say this, and I don't blame them. Because there's \$3 billion that has gone missing and there doesn't seem to be any willingness whatsoever to say, "Let's roll up our sleeves and work together." We came up with some positive ideas, and I think that's regrettable.

I'm very pleased to support this resolution by my friend Ted Arnott, and I will be voting in favour.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Waterloo-Wellington has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Arnott:** I want to thank all the members in this House who have participated in this important debate this morning, particularly my colleagues from Kitchener-Waterloo, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka and the member for Nepean-Carleton, our able and dedicated finance critic.

I want to address some of the points that have been made by some of the Liberal members in this House this morning: the member for York West, the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan and the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I was disappointed because I didn't hear the Liberal members say they're intending to support this resolution.

I would point out to you that I introduced a similar resolution in 1997, and it enjoyed the support of all sides of the House. In fact, it was passed unanimously on a voice vote. At that time, I had the pleasure to listen to the member from Yorkview, who is in the House today and spoke today; he's now the member for York West. In 1997, he said about this initiative: "I will be supporting the bill because I think the principle is a sound one. It's something we can subscribe to as present and future governments. I hope we do that." We didn't hear a statement like that from him today, unfortunately.



I would refer to the Liberal campaign platform, their Achieving Our Potential document, which was one of the documents they used during the election campaign. They made reference to debt reduction:

"We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down.

"We will not add to the provincial debt. We will pay down the debt as conditions allow, with all surpluses going directly to debt payment."

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** Another promise broken.

**Mr Arnott:** As my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has said, this is yet another broken Liberal promise. You can add that to the list. I think it's most disappointing that the Liberal government, within a few days and weeks, has been breaking so many of its promises. This, to me, is a complete abdication of responsibility. I'm very, very disappointed. I'm concerned about the future generations of this province: my children, my grandchildren, if I have any. I think it's most important that we articulate a long-term debt repayment plan and that governments in the future commit to it. I would ask all members of this House to support this important resolution.

#### ONTARIO HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR

#### DU PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Brownell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Ontario Heritage Day and to amend other Acts to include Ontario Heritage Day as a holiday / Projet de loi 16, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine de l'Ontario et modifiant d'autres lois en vue de l'ajouter comme jour férié.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** According to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes.

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** It is a pleasure for me today to speak to this bill, which will proclaim the second Monday of June of each year to be Ontario Heritage Day and to amend other acts to include Ontario Heritage Day as a holiday.

For many years—actually, since I was a teen in my community—I have been actively involved in the conservation and preservation of history and heritage, most recently serving as the president of the Lost Villages Historical Society. Before that, I served as president of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Historical Society and the Cornwall Township Historical Society. I was honoured, yet humbled, when I received the Ontario Heritage Foundation's Heritage Community Recognition Award in 2001.

As we all know, Ontario is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse regions on earth, something of which Ontarians are extremely proud. In our province, we have a long, rich history and heritage of the First Nations communities, and I must say that I am indeed

proud to recognize the community of Akwesasne in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

In my community, and indeed throughout Ontario, we have had settlements developed along the rivers and lakes travelled by the voyageurs. In eastern Ontario, for example, our lost villages of Mille Roches and Moulinette, communities lost to the hydro and seaway projects of the 1950s, provide evidence of the early French culture and heritage in my constituency. This is true for countless communities throughout Ontario. Yes, check the map of Ontario and see the French origins. Then, in the late 1700s, the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists brought large-scale immigration to Ontario, a welcoming immigration policy that continues to this day. Today, we welcome new Ontarians to our province, encouraging them to profile and celebrate their respective heritages of which they are so proud, and which we, as Ontarians, embrace.

The heritage which my paternal grandmother brought to this country as a home child is a heritage of rich Scottish traditions which I celebrate and remember. As an orphaned child from Bridge of Weir, Scotland, she and many other home children left their marks on the landscape of Ontario. The marks they left are those which we as Ontarians must remember and celebrate on Ontario Heritage Day.

It is time that Ontario establishes a day to pay tribute in recognition to the province's long and rich economic, social and political history. It is time to celebrate our province's rich culture and natural heritage. It is evident in the communities in which we live. As other provinces and territories do in Canada, this day will give the opportunity for Ontarians to celebrate their distinct and unique heritages and the important contributions made by generations of settlers and their descendants.

In Canada, provinces and territories do celebrate with special heritage days. For example, Newfoundland and Labrador celebrate Cabot's day, recognizing the contributions of this great explorer and the heritage which developed in that province. In New Brunswick, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Nunavut and the Yukon, a day is recognized in each region to celebrate this distinct heritage.

**1100**

In my area of eastern Ontario, year after year we welcome and embrace the thousands of visitors who travel across the border from Quebec to celebrate Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day in the beautiful parks and recreational areas and campsites of the St Lawrence Parks Commission. As a community, we join with our francophone neighbours in celebrating. But we are also mindful of the economic boom to the businesses as they begin another tourist season.

Ontarians know that statutory holidays are days with special significance, days established by governments to commemorate and celebrate events, usually of a religious or historical nature. They know as well that the primary purpose of the statutory holiday is to provide employees some time from work days to enjoy some leisure time



and to participate in activities and events in the community, knowing that they are not penalized financially during the holiday.

So why an Ontario Heritage Day statutory holiday? Firstly, an Ontario Heritage Day will give us the opportunity to learn about the past as we project to the future. As we have seen through our museums, heritage sites and educational programs, heritage is alive and fun in Ontario, but an Ontario Heritage Day would place our province's rich and diverse history and heritage on a higher plateau.

As well, communities in Ontario have had boosts in their economies and businesses through the development of heritage attractions. A new statutory holiday celebrating heritage in the province of Ontario would be a boom for our recently battered tourism and hospitality industries. With many heritage and historical sites opening in late May and early June throughout the province, an early June statutory holiday celebrating heritage would be the boost needed in the tourism industry.

Having recently stepped down as a commissioner with the St Lawrence Parks Commission, I have seen firsthand the economic hardships borne by such attractions as Upper Canada Village and Fort Henry because of such events as 9/11 and SARS. Having an Ontario Heritage Day to begin the tourist season would be the catalyst for future economic gains. Those who work in tourism know that new and unique programs and events contribute to economic success. A new Ontario Heritage Day will give tourism a boost. Many Ontarians will use a holiday to get outdoors and celebrate the province's diverse natural, cultural and built heritage venues.

Let us for a moment take time to touch on the educational importance of an Ontario Heritage Day, education for our youth and educational opportunities for adults who wish to learn more about Ontario's cultural, natural and built heritage. For over 32 years I provided my students with the opportunities to explore Ontario heritage through outdoor educational programs. These outdoor educational journeys were not opportunities to get out of a hot and muggy classroom on a June day, but it gave my students and I the opportunity to experience history as it came alive in front of us and before our eyes.

In all of our ridings in Ontario, think of the countless opportunities for students as curriculum is developed around Ontario Heritage Day. Think of the opportunities in the riding represented by my friend the honourable Minister of Agriculture, where the death of an elephant, Jumbo, allows students the opportunity to learn about Ontario's rich entertainment industry and allows them to travel back to the time when travelling circuses were anticipated by thousands of Ontarians each year.

Let us teach our children and encourage them to travel to the places where great doctors left their marks on the Ontario landscape. I think about the times I brought my students and members of the historical society, which I had the opportunity to lead, to visit the homes of Dr Solomon Jones at Maitland, Ontario, and the esteemed Senator from Brockville, Dr Fulford. An Ontario

Heritage Day would give educators the opportunity to showcase and build stories around the life and times of Dr Jones, who not only served as eastern Ontario's first doctor but developed progressive agricultural practices in on his farm near Maitland. Children are fascinated by such stories as Dr Fulford's pharmaceutical exploits, developing his patented pink pills for pale people.

Children and adults as well are fascinated to travel and learn about the legends and tales of a great Canadian heroine, Laura Secord. Yes, Laura is more than chocolates, and an Ontario Heritage Day will give Ontarians the chance to discover and reflect on this bit of history in the ridings of St Catharines, Niagara Falls and Niagara Centre. Think too of the valuable stories which would be passed on to our children and grandchildren. Think, too, about the opportunities they will have, by our actions here to have this bill proclaimed, as they take the time from a busy workweek to reflect on Ontario's heritage and history.

I say to my fellow colleagues in this great House, we have much to celebrate in history and heritage in this province. I truly believe that an Ontario Heritage Day will give all Ontarians the opportunity to reflect and celebrate on a great past as we move on to the future. It will be the catalyst to get this province moving in the tourism industry. It will give this province the opportunity to have our hospitality industry move forward.

The heritage organizations in Ontario, from our local museums, our historical societies, LACAC committees and Ontario's biggest heritage booster—the Ontario Heritage Foundation—will truly have reason to celebrate as we bring history and heritage to that higher plateau that I spoke of with an Ontario Heritage Day.

I encourage my colleagues on all sides of this House in this historic chamber to join with me in having Ontario Heritage Day proclaimed in this great province.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on Bill 16, an Act to proclaim Ontario Heritage Day and to amend other Acts to include Ontario Heritage Day as a holiday, as put forward by the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

I think we all agree—it's kind of like motherhood—that supporting Ontario Heritage Day is a worthwhile endeavour. I do have a few questions for the member, however. I believe it's the second Monday in June that he's proposing as the date of a statutory holiday. That does have consequences. I would wonder whether that is the appropriate time for another statutory holiday, when we have Canada Day but a couple of weeks after that. Within the year, the month that doesn't have a statutory holiday is February, so it might make more sense to have a holiday in February.

Certainly there are economic considerations to do with a statutory holiday. There can be some pluses, like increased tourism activity. For example, in my riding—I always like to talk about the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka—we have a number of different attractions with a heritage theme, like Muskoka Heritage Place



in Huntsville, where they have a steam train. It's become a very popular tourist attraction. They have a First Nations component to it as well. Over in the west side of the riding, in Parry Sound we have the West Parry Sound District Museum, which is a very worthwhile attraction. I'd certainly recommend that everyone visit the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka on the new heritage day to visit these attractions. As well, in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka we have seven First Nations communities. In Bracebridge there is the Bird house, an octagonal house of historical importance. So even in our riding there are many other historical and heritage-type attractions.

There needs to be an economic analysis of the effect this heritage day and another statutory holiday would have, the economic considerations for the province. For example, when you have a statutory holiday, small business is required to pay time and a half, but at the same time we could see some economic benefit from the tourism aspects of this.

I would ask that the member do that economic analysis. I wonder whether he has consulted with the stakeholders like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I'm sure they have done surveys of their members and probably would have some ideas about whether this makes sense. I hope he would consult with them.

I would also ask him to check the work done by our very competent former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture, who I believe just last year did extensive consultations with the cultural stakeholders. Julia Munro, the member for York North, did a very thorough job and a lot of extensive consultations with heritage stakeholders. I'm sure her work would be of use to you in determining if this is the appropriate time and if there are any other considerations.

It's a worthwhile idea. I do think we need that economic analysis, and I question whether mid-June is the appropriate time.

1110

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I'm pleased to join in the debate. I want to congratulate the member for bringing the bill forward. I want to point out that before and during the election campaign, the New Democrats said very clearly that we believe we should have two more statutory holidays in the province of Ontario, so I'm supportive of any consideration that moves us along in that regard and say I support the bill that's brought forward today. We supported two statutory holidays, primarily because we believe working people in Ontario, who are working longer and harder than ever before, deserve to have a break. If that break comes in terms of them reflecting on and celebrating Ontario's culture, that's great.

I want to give the House a bit of an idea of a slice of Ontario in terms of my own riding. I think we can all look at our own ridings and look at those who have made important contributions that should be recognized, perhaps in this way, with this bill. I have three First Nations communities in my riding, two in the north part of the riding, one adjacent to a non-native community. All those

communities made very significant contributions very early on to the development particularly of northern Ontario. They are communities that certainly, in some cases, could use more support from the federal government in terms of what they're trying to do—building a child care centre in one of them, for example. But by and large, it would be important for us to acknowledge our very first Canadians in a very significant way.

Secondly, I have a very large Franco-Ontarian population in the riding of Nickel Belt. In fact, the communities adjacent to the one I live in, Capreol, will be celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2004. The heritage committee that has been involved in Valley East has done tremendous work over the last 18 months to two years documenting the history of the families who came to Blezard Valley, to Hanmer etc, talking about their significant contribution. They were primarily involved in agriculture and then became involved in mining in our community and made many other significant contributions. There's a great deal of activity underway with respect to that celebration. Again, this is a community, a population that has made a tremendous impact and a tremendous contribution, not only in northern Ontario, where there are many communities with large francophone populations, but right across the province.

If you look at the composition, you'll see that many others came, primarily because they were involved in the mining industry and the development of that in the Sudbury basin. I think about the very large Finnish population we have, the very large Ukrainian population, the very large Italian population, Greek population, that have been members of our community for many, many years. We are lucky in our community that we have a wonderful association, the Sudbury Multicultural/Folk Arts Association, that celebrates our diversity and is responsible for many multicultural events that occur across our community, efforts made to have people become involved in the celebrations, the language, the art, the culture, the history of all these communities, to make our community much more tolerant. We have a much newer wave of immigration now that has occurred in recent years, many people of Indian descent, many more coming from places in South America, all of whom together are making our community an incredible place to live.

I think each MPP has a similar story they could relate with respect to the composition of their own ridings and the contributions that have been made. If this is an appropriate way to celebrate all that, to recognize it in a very formal way, then I am supportive of that.

In the short time I have, because I said our party had been very interested in two statutory holidays, I should make mention of a resolution debated recently at the Ontario Federation of Labour that had to do with a statutory holiday we should consider on April 28, now recognized as a day of mourning in the province of Ontario but not recognized as a statutory holiday. The April 28 event marks the contributions that have been made by Ontario working men and women, acknow-



ledges and calls all of us to remember those who have died as a result of their workplace, those who have suffered industrial disease as a result of their workplace, those who suffer from ongoing injuries as a result of accidents in their workplace. That particular day—and I think the many members who have participated in the April 28 day of mourning ceremonies in their own ridings recognize that it calls us to remember those who have died and to fight for better occupational health and safety so that we reduce the number of workplace accidents, deaths and disease. The title of that has been “Mourn for the Dead, Fight for the Living,” and it seems to me it would be appropriate for us to consider at one point making that day, April 28, a statutory holiday as well.

**Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** I am proud to support the motion put forward by the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I tried to think of a way that I could speak about this recommendation in a personal way. The first thought that came to my mind about how important it would be to my community was the fact that in Brampton we’ve been known as the Flowertown of Canada for many, many years. That’s changed over the years. I think part of our aim is to celebrate the rich, diverse and proud heritage of Ontario, and that’s something I’d like to encourage people to think of when they think of Brampton.

From the 1800s until the 1970s, roses, tulips, orchids, violets, daffodils, carnations and chrysanthemums made Brampton famous around the world. We were dubbed the Flowertown of Canada. We were once home to dozens of acres of greenhouses, and at their peak in the 1950s we produced more than 20 million blooms a year. Today there’s very little left of Flowertown. In fact, there are just some small retailers that are left from that proud heritage.

It had its start in the small market gardens of Edward Dale. He arrived in Brampton from England with his family and created a small dugout type greenhouse to raise produce. Like other market gardeners, Mr Dale would peddle his produce door to door. According to the family legend, his son was not interested in producing the produce; he was more interested in the flowers that were growing wild in the neighbourhood. With each vegetable order, he ensured his dad included a rose for the lady of the house. By the time they went into business together in 1869, Harry had developed a cut rose variety of roses that convinced his father to add flowers to his greenhouse. The enterprise grew rapidly, with roses exceeding the popularity and profitability of the vegetables. Soon the roses were being shipped all over North America and England. After the death of Sir John S. Macdonald in June 1891, as many as 800 roses were shipped to Ottawa and Montreal from the Dale greenhouses.

By 1915, 3.75 acres had become 25 acres, with over 1.25 million square feet of glass, making Dale the largest employer in Brampton, according to The Brampton Sesquicentennial Historical CD-ROM.

Looking for ways to expand the estate, Duggan visited England, where he examined similar industries. He was

inspired by what he saw, and by the mid-1930s the Dale estate owned and operated 250 acres, employing more than 350 workers, with 132 greenhouses and approximately 1.5 million square feet of glass covering 40 acres of the estate. You don’t see that now; that history is gone. Although the flower market in England was larger, the Dale estate’s became the largest under glass, encased in greenhouses.

Following the war, Brampton’s Flowertown began to feel the effects of a massive population boom, reliable air travel and skyrocketing oil prices. The demand for land increased, and nearby businesses such as AVRO/Orenda Engines and Dixie Cup soon were offering higher wages. An increasingly fast world, where air travel was more reliable and flowers could be more cheaply shipped from South America, also left Flowertown behind. In 1961, there were 61 flower growers in the Brampton area. In December 1974, there were 13.

In an attempt to revive the flower spirit, the city, the Dales and other local businesses sponsored Brampton’s first Flower Festival in 1963, including a parade and a concert band in our Gage Park. The festival, renamed in 1981 as the Pine and Rose Festival, ran for 26 years before the board of directors disbanded in 1988 over financial difficulties.

Although 81 businesses are listed under “florist” in the Brampton area Yellow Pages, the closest greenhouses are in Huttonville. Only two flower retailers remain from Flowertown days.

I support this bill; I think it makes a lot of sense. It’s important to recognize your history. You can’t understand where you’re going if you don’t know your past.

1120

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** It’s a pleasure to rise today in the House to speak to Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Ontario Heritage Day and to amend other Acts to include Ontario Heritage Day as a holiday.

I guess it’s laudable to recognize the importance that heritage plays in our society, and I think we should, from time to time, take time to stop and think of that. I commend the member opposite for bringing this bill forward.

Having said that, I’ll start off by saying that I won’t be able to support the bill. I have some real concerns, and they have to do with what the impact of doing this will be, not only on our heritage but on our economy and on the very people whom we want to help.

The member brought forward the situation we’ve had in the past year, where we had problems with our tourist industry because of some of the things that have happened in our society. We need to do something to bring more tourists in to help those people in the tourist industry recover from the SARS and other impacts. Yet we are going to be asking those same people to pay half as much again for the people who are working on that day in order to bring these people in.

I don’t think the declaration of the holiday will bring people from outside Ontario into the province, because declaring the day will have no impact in other provinces or in other countries. The impact will just be here. So



what it's really going to suggest, as I see it, is that we are going to ask all the people who employ personnel in this province to pay people so they can go out and enjoy a holiday. Of course, the cost of doing that will be tacked on to the products or the deficit of products or the lack of products produced that day in our society, which will make all our exports and all our products that we produce more expensive on the markets. So again, it will be a disadvantage to our economy.

I think a lot of people would appreciate a signal as to when the heritage appreciation and the summer holidays start—starting in mid-June as opposed to the end of June may be a good idea. As we all know, our summer holidays, when people take time off and travel the province and go and visit these tourist attractions, traditionally start the first part of July as opposed to mid-June. This may very well encourage them to start earlier. I don't expect them to do it much longer, because they will not have generated much more revenue.

I have a bit of a question to the member, and maybe he could answer it in his responses. I did get a printout of some of the information, as it relates to the act, and some of the pluses and minuses of introducing this piece of legislation. I was very much impressed with the fact that we would be recognizing the contribution of our settlers, their descendants, our First Nations and new Ontarians.

I'm not quite sure I understand how new Ontarians fall into that category, as to how their heritage would be recognized. I know we have a lot of special days declared for new Ontarians who come from offshore and immigrate to Ontario, and I happen to be one of those. We have special days for nationalities to recognize their heritage and their contribution to our society, and I'm not sure declaring an Ontario Heritage Day—at least I'm not clear as to how the member opposite would see that as coming out in this bill. So I'm not sure that that has a great impact.

As I said, I'm a new Canadian myself—I'm not sure whether we can call it "new"; it was 51 years ago that we arrived in this great country—and we celebrate that each and every year. In fact, I'd just like to relate that I came here in 1952. We landed at pier 21 in Halifax with 14 siblings and my parents. Last year, we had the great opportunity to celebrate our arrival in this great country and having spent 50 years here. We invited just the immediate family of those descendants. Incidentally, we don't have a special day to recognize this, but it was in April we arrived, so maybe we could move this day to April if the legislation passes.

This year we invited all the people to come back and celebrate with us our good fortune to be Canadians. We had to send out invitations to 236 direct descendants of our family, and 197 of them came to the celebration—since that time, of course, this heritage has moved out; one of them came from as far away as Australia to visit—because they were part of that family that arrived here in 1952. As I say, I take great pride in the heritage, in being an Ontarian and in being a Canadian, but I'm not sure that this legislation will deal with that at all.

I would be much more comfortable in supporting the bill if the member opposite had brought forward some information that he had contacted the business community, the retail sector, the people who will be impacted, hopefully not negatively impacted, by this legislation. It would be nice to know what they thought of that and whether this was, in their estimation, going to improve their economy and their lot in life, or whether in fact it is going to be a hindrance. I would be much more comfortable if I had that type of information to help me in my deliberations. I strongly support the need to celebrate our heritage and the need to recognize the positives in our society, but I don't believe we should do that at the expense of our society. I really believe that this is going to do that.

Lastly, I would just like to again ask the member who proposed this legislation—on the other side of the information page, in listing where the statutory holidays are in different jurisdictions, we have listed that a number of them have nine paid holidays; Ontario and Quebec have only eight, and of course that is the second-highest in Canada. But then when we look at the next slide, in fact it suggests that there are 10 in Ontario too. I was just wondering if maybe we could get clarification on that.

With that, I will turn my time over to my colleagues. I thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to speak to this bill.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Just before I get into the details about why I support this and what kinds of comments I have in regard to this particular bill, I just want to say it's interesting that the previous speaker says we should go out and consult with the small business community, because after all they're the ones who are going to have to foot the bill for the holiday.

I understand that as far as logic, but the inference I thought the member meant was that maybe we have too many holidays now. I just want to point out that other jurisdictions in the world are much more progressive when it comes to dealing with the issue of holidays than we are here in North America. Quite frankly, North America is probably one of the worst jurisdictions when it comes to statutory holidays for their citizens.

If you go into powerhouse economies like Germany, France and many other European economies, it is standard there in the first year to get four or five weeks' holidays. The interesting part is, people don't see that as a cost of business; they see that as a benefit. Because what it has done, quite frankly, is to create a culture in Europe where people actually take their holidays, take their savings and go on a little trip somewhere, within the European common union more times than not. It has created a tourism industry in Europe that is far outpacing anything that we're doing here in North America.

We seem to have this attitude in North America, "Nose to the grind wheel. Work 14 hours a day, seven days a week, 365," and if you don't do that, somehow you're not as good as the rest of the people in the economy. I remember reading the book *Future Shock* when I was a teenager in high school. I'll tell you, the



year 2000 isn't at all what I expected it to be, because I thought we were going to get a lot smarter and we were going to learn how to really build in, by way of legislation, the ability for people to take time off and enjoy their lives so that they could be more refreshed and better able to contribute to the workplace that they work in.

I think in North America, quite frankly, we have some of the worst legislation when it comes to mandatory holidays. So on the basis that this is an additional holiday for people, I support it. I just want to say that out front. But I just think at one point it would be interesting—actually, I'm thinking of bringing such a bill into this Legislature—that we look at the jurisdictions of Sweden, Denmark, Norway—Holland is quite progressive, to my good friend across the way here. I've been there a number of times. People in Europe are quite progressive when it comes to this whole issue of the concept of holidays and statutory holidays.

1130

To the issue of this bill being called a heritage—what are you calling it?—heritage day, I guess is what you're calling it? I just want to point something out. A couple of First Nations friends of mine were here the other day. You might have noticed them in the gallery. We were having a bit of a chat about this bill when you were introducing it. They were a little bit taken aback. Not to be negative toward what you're doing, but they're saying, "Heritage? God, we were here first. What do you mean? We come from here. We didn't come from anywhere else. You're the immigrants. You all came from over there and came to Canada and North America; we were here. If you want to signal in some way the heritage our country has gained from First Nations people"—I think their comment is a good one—"maybe we deserve a holiday of our own." I just put that on the record, because I know among my First Nations friends across the province, as I think of people I deal with, everyone from the chiefs of Ontario to the local communities in my riding, there is a real sense within the aboriginal community that they are different, in their own minds and their own rights, from the rest of Canadians; that they are not founding fathers, they are not immigrants to this great nation, that they are the people who were here before, and we're the people who came after. I just signal to you that there is a little bit of uneasiness in comments I got from some of my First Nations friends on this.

I was also talking to—it's funny how these things go—another gentleman, a francophone from my riding, who happened to be in the gallery on the day this bill was introduced. I thought it was kind of interesting. I had First Nations friends from the James Bay coast and a friend of mine from Timmins here when the bill was put in place. He raised the point—I don't necessarily agree with him, but I think the member needs to respond to his point—that francophones and anglophones see themselves as founding members of our country, and maybe the bill should have been called multicultural day. That was the question he was asking: Are you trying to celebrate the multiculturalism of Canada, all the people who

emigrated from all the various nations of the world vis-à-vis what their cultural background might be? He wondered why you didn't call it multicultural day. I said to my buddy, "Don't get hung up on it, because I'm sure the member is doing this for all the right reasons and he'll respond to that in his speech."

But I will support it. It's a step in the right direction. I would just echo what my friend from Sudbury said: It would be nice to do a workers' day on April 16 to mark those workers who have died in the workplace.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I'm pleased to rise in support of this bill from my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I think my colleague has given a very good historical perspective as to why this bill is important, as to why as a province we need to celebrate and remember our history, our heritage.

Speaking as someone who was not born in Canada, coming to Canada as a child, admittedly I very much appreciate the multiculturalism, the embracing of diversity that we have in this great province of ours. With that, I think many young people may tend to lose a little bit of the historical perspective of this province, may tend to lose the value or not understand it because we're doing such a great job of integrating and working together and showing the world how we can come together from all countries around the world to Canada, to Ontario in particular, the biggest focus of immigration in the country, and really show the world a model of understanding and acceptance and working together. But in that, we possibly tend to lose a little bit of our history of this province.

I look at Ontario Heritage Day as a celebration, a day on which we can celebrate the wonderful contributions over the years of people in this province: natives, francophones and other Canadians and Ontarians from all walks of life, some who have been spoken of today in the House. It's an opportunity for the schools to become involved as part of this program. I can envision the schools actually doing much more than they should be doing to help young people understand the heritage of this province.

We should be very proud. We have a very rich history in Ontario. We have a history we should be proud of. We have a history of pioneers. We have a history of inventors, of people who have stretched the limits, of people who have gone beyond the call of duty in making this province a better place to live over the years. This opportunity of celebrating Ontario Heritage Day would give us that. It would give us an opportunity to highlight some of these individuals. It would give us an understanding of where we came from as a province. I believe that is extremely important, because if we are not careful, we are going to lose some of that. If we are not careful, we are going to lose some of the historical perspective, as a province and as a country, that I think is valuable and is as rich any country in the world, any province in the world.

The other aspect of this bill that I certainly support is the fact that it would be a statutory holiday. I find it a



passing fascination that some of my Tory friends across the floor are saying, "Well, who have you consulted? Have you consulted the chamber of commerce? Have you consulted the Canadian Federation of Business?" But none of them have said, "Have you consulted working men and women who may like another statutory holiday to spend with their family and friends?" The fact is that in this fast-moving society of ours, this fast-moving world of ours, there's often not enough time for family and friends. I think many working people who would benefit from this would very much appreciate the opportunity to have another day in June that they can spend with their family and friends.

Again, work the schools into this. Use it as an opportunity to educate young people as to why it's not just a day off but, "Here's what we're celebrating today."

So I believe that this is a very worthwhile piece of legislation. I am hopeful that all my colleagues in the Legislature will support it. It is important to celebrate our multiculturalism, it is important to celebrate the Ontario we have today, but it's also important to celebrate the history of this great province. This bill will help us do that.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** It's a privilege to speak on this bill for a few minutes and mention that this has been talked about before in the House, and in Ottawa they talked about a Heritage Day across Canada. I think it might even be better if we had it in February. I think February is when people need a break. Christmas is gone and spring's not there. In February they need a break—

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** Groundhog Day.

**Mr. Murdoch:** —and we could call it Groundhog Day. Yes, the member for St Catharines knows what I'm going to talk about. Of course, in Wiarton we have the most famous groundhog in the world, called Wiarton Willie.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Murdoch:** Wiarton Willie has caused some problems here before when he had that untimely death and we had to find some of his predecessors. I believe that we had to go all the way to Ottawa. I believe Wiarton Willie had visited Ottawa somewhere along the line and he had some offspring there that we were able to bring back. So the bloodlines of Wiarton Willie are still there.

That's when we celebrate in Wiarton. Wiarton Willie comes out and tells us what's going to happen, when we're going to have spring. Sometimes he's right; sometimes he's wrong. It took our last mayor quite some time to learn groundhogese. It's another language we have in Wiarton. Not many people can speak that, but that's one of the things the mayor has to do. Carl Noble was the new mayor the first time, and he did get it mixed up. He had spring coming early and Willie had it coming late. The two of them just didn't get together on that.

So I would suggest that if we're going to have a Heritage Day, that's when it should be, in February when people are feeling the winter blues and maybe need a holiday.

The other thing we'd have to look at, that Mr Miller mentioned, is the economic impact of another holiday on businesses and things like that. It is quite expensive and it's something we would have to look at. As I said, my colleague the MP Ovid Jackson from my riding is supporting this in Ottawa too, that there may be a Heritage Day, but we would call it Wiarton Willie Groundhog Day and that would go right across Canada. We could probably support something like that.

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** It is a great honour for me to speak in favour of my colleague's bill, Bill 16, An Act to proclaim Ontario Heritage Day. Just before I address this bill, I would like to congratulate the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for his first election victory to the Ontario Legislature. It has been only two months since the provincial election and my colleague from the riding next to mine is already demonstrating that residents from his riding made the right choice in sending him to Queen's Park.

1140

Ontario is a beautiful province, a province that is rich in diversity and with a history that is worth celebrating. What better way to recognize the important contribution made by generations of settlers and their descendants, as well as First Nations, than to proclaim the second Monday of June in each year as Ontario Heritage Day in the province of Ontario?

Francophone residents are a very important part of Ontario's rich diversity. La langue française est présente en Ontario depuis plus de 350 ans. Les premiers francophones qui se sont installés dans le territoire de l'Ontario furent les missionnaires qui établirent la mission de Sainte-Marie-au-pays-des-Hurons en 1639. La communauté francophone de l'Ontario compose la communauté francophone la plus nombreuse au Canada après celle du Québec. Le français est une des langues officielles au Canada. En Ontario, il jouit du statut de langue officielle devant les tribunaux, dans l'éducation et à l'Assemblée législative. Il y a présentement environ 540 000 francophones et environ un million de francophiles en Ontario. En juin 2001, l'emblème de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario a été officiellement reconnu par l'Ontario à l'unanimité dans cette Assemblée législative.

Ma circonscription, tout comme l'Ontario, a une histoire riche. Je suis fier que Samuel de Champlain est passé par ma région. Certains disent que Champlain aurait lui-même changé le nom d'un village de ma circonscription, le village de Grande-Chute, à Chute-à-Blondeau, en mémoire de Blondeau, un ami cher de Paris, mais selon la toponymie la plus récente, ce petit village n'aurait obtenu son nom qu'en 1875, pour d'autres raisons qui ne ressemblent pas du tout à celles mentionnées ci-dessus.

Également, les historiens savent que Cartier a exploré le territoire de ce qui est aujourd'hui la ville d'Ottawa, mais peu de documents étoffent l'histoire de Samuel de Champlain en Outaouais. Son séjour s'avère de courte durée, de quelques jours, tout au plus quelques semaines.



This is but a fraction of Ontario's rich history. Ontario Heritage Day is a wonderful idea. On behalf of all Ontarians, especially Franco-Ontarians, I thank my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for introducing this bill, a bill that would go a long way in sparking the pride Ontarians feel for this wonderful province. I urge all members of this Legislature to support this bill.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate today. I think it's a good idea, to the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

I just wonder about this. I think he did good research on it with respect to the other jurisdictions. I noticed he indicated what the other provinces were doing and what statutory holidays we have. Certainly I think it should be reviewed. It's been quite a while since we've looked at the statutory holidays, and it's probably a worthwhile review. I don't know whether that's going to be a part of the Minister of Labour's review with respect to statutory holidays. I would say that obviously the Minister of Labour will have a major say in this, and I note that this is a private member's bill. It's not one that has been brought forth by the minister, it's not a government bill, so I don't know whether there's support there from the Minister of Labour. I haven't seen anything in writing with respect to their support.

Consultation is important and you have to have that—there are certainly stakeholders that are going to be impacted by this, employers, to name a few, the tourism industry and other stakeholders—in terms of what their thoughts are.

I think the member from Owen Sound and the member from Muskoka-Parry Sound mentioned the timing of this. You have a statutory holiday in May, you have another statutory holiday in July, another one in August, and another in September. The timing of this, in terms of being in June, may be something that could be reviewed. Perhaps it's more beneficial to the general public having it in February, when it may be of more use to them in terms of having not had any holidays.

But certainly this could be a great benefit for tourism, and I would look at supporting this.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I stand to support the measure from the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. Most of us in this legislative chamber count among the most rewarding and enjoyable of our community tasks the reaching out to our ethnic communities. Many of us have helped groups get organized to raise money among their membership, to celebrate the connections they have to their countries of origin, and to assist newcomers with settlement and integration issues.

Especially here in Ontario, which continues to be the engine of growth in Canada, we need to look at our vibrant body of newcomers and to ask ourselves if there is a good reason we should not celebrate their continuing and vital contribution to Canada and to the rich fabric of diversity that drives our province's prosperity.

If we gather with members of individual ethnic communities to celebrate with them the events that are significant to their country of origin, I say it's time to gather together to establish a Canadian event that commemorates the contributions of those who leave their country of origin to settle in Ontario and to build our country.

The sacrifices made by newcomers can be recognized annually at an Ontario Heritage Day. Newcomers who apply to their Canadian embassy at home or who arrive desperate on our shores as refugees from ethnic, religious or political persecution abroad would benefit, as would Canadians, from a knowledge of their culture and their heritage.

Other jurisdictions in Canada have statutory holidays to celebrate aspects of heritage. Curiously, Ontario, the most diverse province in our confederation, does not. The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh asks, with this bill, why not? Even the United States, the traditional yardstick by which new initiatives are measured in Ontario, has one more statutory holiday than does Canada. Let's open up one day each year to celebrate Ontario's diversity, to know one another better and to enjoy a day off while the weather is good.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Brownell:** It's certainly an honour for me to stand today in the House to make the presentation on this bill, a bill that's very near and dear to my heart, as I've explained.

At the outset, in my wrap-up, I would like to thank the members from my side of the House from Brampton Centre, Hamilton East, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Mississauga West for their comments of support. As well, I would like to thank those on the other side of the House—the members from Parry Sound, Nickel Belt, Oxford, Timmins-James Bay, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford—for their comments and for, in most cases, their support of the concept. With this bill, there is and there will be an opportunity for further debate, a further opportunity to look at economic impacts, to look at the stakeholders and to consult with those stakeholders.

I have to say, though, that we must look at the working people of our province. We must listen to the working people of our province in that, yes, they are saying that time off to celebrate, time off to bring heritage to that higher level, is what is needed. As I listened today to the debate, I saw Ms Jeffrey bring history to a higher level. She talked about flowers from her riding coming down to my riding to be used when the Honourable John Sandfield Macdonald, our province's first Premier, was laid to rest in the municipality I live in, South Stormont.

That's what this bill will do. It will give Ontarians that chance to celebrate, that chance to link history, as it should be in this great province, with our First Nations people and new Ontarians.

I thank you for your support and I look forward to the vote on this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There being no further debate, and pursuant to standing order 96, the business of this House is suspended until noon. So don't go away.

*The House recessed from 1150 to 1200.*

#### DEBT RETIREMENT PLAN

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** First, we will deal with ballot item number 3, in the name of Mr Arnott.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There will be a vote on this, and we will deal with this matter after the second item.

#### ONTARIO HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

##### LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR

##### DU PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** On ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr Brownell, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It's carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96—

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I request that this bill, An Act to proclaim Ontario Heritage Day and to amend other acts to include Ontario Heritage Day as a holiday, be referred to the standing committee on general government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour?

I heard a no. It will be referred to the committee of the whole.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. We'll learn this as we go along.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing.

All those opposed will stand and be counted.

The majority is in favour, so the bill is referred to the standing committee on general government.

#### DEBT RETIREMENT PLAN

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Call in the members. I remind you that this will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1203 to 1208.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Mr Arnott has moved private member's notice of motion number 1.

All those in favour will stand until recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Amott, Ted  
Baird, John R.

Klees, Frank  
Miller, Norm

Runciman, Robert W.  
Scott, Laurie

Barrett, Toby  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hudak, Tim

Munro, Julia  
Murdoch, Bill  
O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Tascona, Joseph N.  
Yakabuski, John

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will stand until recognized by the Clerk.

#### Nays

Agostino, Dominic  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Bisson, Gilles  
Bradley, James J.  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brownell, Jim  
Caplan, David  
Craitor, Kim  
Delaney, Bob  
Di Cocco, Caroline  
Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter  
Gravelle, Michael  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Kular, Kuldeep  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff  
Levac, Dave  
Martel, Shelley  
Mauro, Bill  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Mitchell, Carol  
Oraziotti, David

Parsons, Ernie  
Phillips, Gerry  
Racco, Mario G.  
Ramal, Khalil  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Sergio, Mario  
Smitherman, George  
Takhar, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 16; the nays are 41.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30.

*The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.*

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### CHRISTMAS EVENTS IN DURHAM

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's my pleasure to share with the House today just one of many outstanding Christmas events taking place in my riding of Durham. If the opportunity arises, I'd be pleased to recognize more of these events.

On December 5, close to 2,000 people gathered at the community Christmas tree in historic downtown Bowmanville for the annual Moonlight Magic and Tree-Lighting Ceremony; a Just for Kids concert by entertainers Terri and Rick; and performances by the Bowmanville Handbell Choir from the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Volunteers from St John's Anglican Church, led by George Webster, are playing Christmas music on the church carillon each weekend throughout the festive season.

The Moonlight Magic evening also included a message by Pastor Paul Vanstralen of Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church. Charles Taws, curator of the Bowmanville Museum, invited everyone to the nearby Edwardian Christmas celebration at the museum. Ron Hooper, chair of the board of management, served as master of ceremonies.

A highlight of the evening was the lighting of the 40 strands of lights on the Christmas tree by Mayor John Mutton. Some of the many people who contributed to the



success of the evening were Garth Gilpin, Shane Hastings, Paul Watson, Paul Morton, Bob Gilbank and Mike Burke. The Bowmanville Kinsmen Club warmed the evening with hot chocolate.

This is but one shining example of yuletide in my riding of Durham.

#### SHIRLEY EIDT

**Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre):** I rise today to pay tribute to Shirley Eidt, born Shirley Pickle in Leamington, Ontario, in 1927. Shirley succumbed to cancer Saturday, November 29.

Over the course of three decades she served the people of Scarborough, particularly the Scarborough Centre area, as school trustee, alderman, councillor and Metro councillor. A registered nurse by profession, Shirley has been called "the mother of public health in the old city of Scarborough" and was a driving force behind the creation of the Indianapolis-Scarborough Peace Games, originating in 1972.

Shirley was the epitome of the community volunteer. An elder at St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, she assisted the developmentally handicapped children at the local elementary school, served on the boards of the Canadian Cancer Society and the Jack Goodlad Seniors' Residence, and was a long-time volunteer for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Predeceased by her husband, Tom, Shirley is survived by her children Cathy and Jim, their spouses Brad and Nancy and her three grandchildren, whom she fondly referred to as her "kidlets": Chris, Casey and Caley.

When Shirley first retired from public life in 1991, she said her goals were "to help people with their problems and to promote public participation in local government. We now have public participation in local government and I am still helping people with their problems," she said.

Shirley touched people's lives. She'll be sorely missed. I wish to extend condolences to her and her family and her many, many friends.

#### VIOLET HIPGRAVE

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I rise today to recognize Violet Hipgrave. Violet is a long-time resident of Huntsville in my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. Vi, as she is known to everyone, has been a dedicated volunteer for many years at Fairvern Nursing Home in Huntsville. Vi attends to her regular commitment of wheeling residents from the their rooms to breakfast once a week, often starting as early as 6:30 am. Vi's commitment to the residents at Fairvern doesn't end there. She is also involved in their breakfast club program and can be counted on to help whenever the need arises. Vi also visits palliative care residents at Fairvern. Fortunately, Vi lives only a block away from Fairvern. Violet is well known to patients who require ambulance service to out-of-area hospitals. She accom-

panies patients to provide support while they're being transported, and will do this several times a week. She is much loved by the residents there. Violet is also a member of Huntsville Hospice. She is a recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Award in recognition of her selfless volunteerism.

I've witnessed Vi's volunteer work at Fairvern firsthand, and I was moved by her caring touch. I would like to personally congratulate Vi on her 80th birthday, which she will celebrate on December 13, 2003, at Fairvern Nursing Home.

#### MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN BRANT

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** It's a new era for municipalities in this province. Signals of hope and resources are already flowing to our municipal partners, telling them they are no longer creatures of the province, but real partners. To that end, I want to congratulate the new mayor of Brantford, Mike Hancock, on his election victory. His inaugural address earlier this month spoke of a commitment to openness, co-operation, transparency, inclusiveness and team-building. I also want to congratulate the returning councillors and the newly elected members who make up the rest of the team that works with the staff and officials to provide services our community needs.

I also congratulate the re-elected mayor of Brant, Ron Eddy, along with the entire council returning, acclaimed and newly elected members. Best wishes to both councils as you continue to build communities that truly respond to the needs of the people.

As we in the riding of Brant tackle such challenges as downtown renewal, continued growth and development of Laurier Brantford, Mohawk College, Nipissing teachers' college—Brantford campus, brownfield redevelopment and infrastructure renewal, let it be known that it will be done in co-operation and partnership with the government of Ontario and the government of Canada. It is the only way the people ever expected us to do this in the first place.

Finally, I want to pay special tribute to the outgoing members of the previous councils for their dedication and willingness to serve the public, which they did with dignity and honour: former mayor of Brantford, Chris Friel; councillors Vince Bucci, Paul Urbanowicz and Wally Lucente; councillors of the county, Bob Van Sickle, Ron Dancy, Art MacKenzie, Diane Cooper and Barbara McMillan. Thank you very much for your dedication to your community.

#### HYDRO RATES

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** The government's broken promise to remove the 4.3-cent electricity rate cap will devastate many seniors, single mothers, disabled and vulnerable persons.

No one believes that the average consumer will only see a \$6-a-month increase. What the government hasn't

told voters is exactly who is profiting from this hydro rate hike. Well, it's the local distribution companies that will now be permitted to collect over a billion dollars in deferred asset charges and guaranteed 10% profit margins, not on the backs of large, industrial consumers, but on the backs of residential and small business consumers, seniors living on fixed incomes like Mr and Mrs Hawkins of Woodstock, who face a 32% increase in their monthly hydro bill. They can't cut back on their energy consumption due to a chronic illness requiring oxygen and air purification systems 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Liberals refuse to listen to the Hawkins. In fact, the Minister of Energy yesterday told this House that he had instructed his Liberal members to reject amendments from consumer groups before they were even tabled. Why waste taxpayers' money on three hours of public hearings to hear six people, when the government had predetermined it had rejected their advice. Today I will table a private member's bill amending the Electricity Act to protect our frail elderly, poor and disabled citizens. These utilities, about to collect a billion dollars, should not be able to cut off the hydro of vulnerable persons during the dead of winter.

1340

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY IN LONDON

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** I want to rise today to bring attention to a recent comment by Mr Dennis DesRosiers. He is the leading automotive industry analyst.

My riding of London-Fanshawe has a large industrial base, and in London, the automotive industry alone employs one out of every five people. The automotive industry is very important in Ontario's economy and in London. It's one of the fundamental pillars of our economy.

While the automotive industry has seen a slight decline overall, DesRosiers pointed out that London's automotive-based economy is surging. The reason for this is the work of the mayor of London, Anne Marie DeCicco, and the London Economic Development Corp, who foresaw what sort of automotive industry would work in London and then went out and brought it there. They convinced leading automotive industries in Europe to come to London and open bases and factories to employ the people of London.

Without a strong automotive industry, the London economy would not work. I'm proud to stand today to recognize the efforts of Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco and the London Economic Development Corp on behalf of the people who are prospering in my riding.

#### REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** Earlier today I tabled a resolution calling on the government to introduce legislation to require hospitals and physicians

to report gunshot wounds and knife injuries to their local police service. Recently this has become a major irritant in terms of police relations with hospitals and physicians, especially, I think it's fair to say, in the Toronto area. Some Toronto police officers have described a number of Toronto hospitals as "virtual safe havens for injured gunmen on the lam."

The Ontario Medical Association has recognized the gravity of the situation and last month issued a position statement urging action by the provincial government.

Most Ontarians would find it difficult to believe that physicians and hospitals are required to report patients considered unfit to drive, but when dealing with a wounded and possibly fleeing felon, they have no obligation to inform, let alone co-operate, with the police.

This is an untenable situation and I encourage the government to move quickly to institute a law requiring reporting and, at the same time, provide physicians and others with a comfort level regarding their ethical and statutory duties to patients.

#### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** Last night the Toronto ceremony for the 2003 Volunteer Service Awards was held at the Toronto Centre for the Arts.

The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards honour those Ontarians who have committed their time and energy to organizations for five years or more and youth who have volunteered for one organization for two years or more. Volunteers fill in the gaps in our society, they keep people from falling through the cracks, but often they're not recognized. These awards give people an opportunity to be recognized for their work.

At this year's ceremony, 51 residents of Don Valley West were honoured. I'd like to bring the Legislature's attention to five of them who have volunteered for 25 years or more with one organization: Ruby Chapman, who has volunteered for 30 years at the Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre; Jalou Kooper, who has volunteered for 25 years with the Zoroastrian Society of Ontario; Kassamali Ahmed Dawood, who has volunteered for 30 years with the Ismaili Muslims home and hospital visitation committee; Marjorie Ribble, who has volunteered for 30 years at Nisbet Lodge; and Ethel Wakayama, who has volunteered for 25 years with the art and culture program at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. I don't think we can underestimate the contribution that these people make, and I'd like to thank all Ontarians who volunteer their service.

#### FEDERAL LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** It's a great privilege for me to rise in my place and announce that our caucus is going to induct the first lifetime achievement award in the Liberal promise-breakers club. This is



awarded to someone who has made a career of breaking promises and not fulfilling election campaign commitments.

Could I have the envelope please, Mr Runciman? Thank you. Who will this be?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Baird:** Just pay attention. The winner is the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien on his last day in office. This individual has made a career of misleading voters and not fulfilling campaign commitments. He has broken his promise to renegotiate the free trade agreement. He has broken the promise to scrap the GST. He has broken his campaign promise to "appoint an independent ethics commissioner." He has broken his campaign commitment to say, "My decision to cancel the"—

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** On a point of order, Speaker: I don't want to catch the member in full stream, but I heard the words "misleading voters." I wondered whether that terminology is parliamentary or not.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I didn't hear the word, but if the word is there and you would like to withdraw it, that's fine.

**Mr Baird:** I did use the word, but he's not a member of the House. The rule says, you're not allowed to mislead—could I speak to the point before you rule?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Mr Baird:** There were 30 seconds on the clock.

**The Speaker:** You go ahead. I'll tell you when the time is up.

**Mr Baird:** He broke his campaign commitment when he said, "My decision to scrap the EH-101 and Pearson Airport deals won't cost taxpayers a cent." He said that he would want a scandal-free government and that he would sell the government's flying Taj Mahal.

Congratulations to 40 years of breaking promises in Ottawa. Thank goodness Mr Chrétien is on his way out the door. We're beginning to see a brighter future in Ottawa thanks to my colleague the member for Leeds-Grenville.

## SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** In the spirit of Christmas I ask the Liberal government: Ho, ho, ho, where's the dough for the Sudbury Regional Hospital? That's right, where's the money to pay for 85% of the construction costs for the Sudbury Regional Hospital as advocated by the member for Sudbury during the election campaign?

On September 9, the member told the Sudbury Star, "Our job is to advocate what we believe in, which is an 85/15 split. We will not deviate from that." I agree, just as I agreed with the member when he told the Sudbury Star on August 22, "We will be back here, demanding that this government"—Conservative at the time—"live up to an 85/15 split." Both the member for Sudbury and I are on the public record on more than one occasion calling on the previous Conservative government to

recognize our hospital as a regional hospital and fund an increased share of construction costs. Both of us have specifically referenced an 85%/15% split of the costs.

The member's party got elected to government, and now it's time to deliver. Our community was asked to raise \$17.5 million, and we raised \$23 million. We can't afford to fundraise any more, nor should the hospital be forced into a mortgage scheme to cover higher construction costs, because I believe that finding the money for mortgage payments will come at the expense of hospital jobs and programs for patients.

Christmas is upon us. I say to the Liberals, give our community something to celebrate. Announce that you will fund 85% of the construction costs of the Sudbury Regional Hospital.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE

#### ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 2, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility / Projet de loi 2, Loi concernant la gestion responsable des finances.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Shall the report be adopted? I heard a "no."

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise to be counted by the Clerk.

### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie
Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Peterson, Tim
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwintar, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sorbara, Greg
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Van Bommel, Maria
Craiton, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise.

## Nays

Amott, Ted  
Baird, John R.  
Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Flaherty, Jim  
Hampton, Howard

Hardeman, Ernie  
Jackson, Cameron  
Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley  
Miller, Norm  
Munro, Julia  
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Prue, Michael  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Scott, Laurie  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth

Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles  
Chudleigh, Ted  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Flaherty, Jim  
Hampton, Howard  
Hardeman, Ernie

Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley  
Miller, Norm  
Munro, Julia  
Murdoch, Bill  
O'Toole, John

Runciman, Robert W.  
Scott, Laurie  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 53; the nays are 24.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, December 4, 2003, the bill is now ordered for third reading.

# STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

**Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing / *Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario à l'égard de l'établissement du coût de l'électricité.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have got it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise and be counted.

## Ayes

Agostino, Dominic  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Bentley, Christopher  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Bountrogianni, Marie  
Bradley, James J.  
Broten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Caplan, David  
Chambers, Mary Anne V.  
Colle, Mike  
Craiton, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic  
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gerretsen, John  
Gravelle, Michael  
Hoy, Pat  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff  
Levac, Dave  
Marsales, Judy  
Matthews, Deborah  
Mauro, Bill  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol

Orazietti, David  
Parsons, Ernie  
Peterson, Tim  
Phillips, Gerry  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Racco, Mario G.  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Sandals, Liz  
Smitherman, George  
Sorbara, Greg  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

## Nays

Amott, Ted  
Baird, John R.

Hudak, Tim  
Jackson, Cameron

Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Prue, Michael

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 26; the nays are 25.

*Interjections.*

**Clerk of the House:** It's 56. Sorry. I'll take it from the top: The ayes are 56; the nays are 25.

**The Speaker:** There is still hope, eh?

The ayes are 56 and the nays are 25. I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, December 4, 2003, the bill is ordered for third reading.

**Interjection:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** If it's the introduction of anyone, could you wait until I just complete this?

## MINISTER OF ENERGY'S REMARKS

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Yesterday, the member for Burlington, Mr Jackson, rose on a point of order respecting certain remarks made by the Minister of Energy. I beg to inform the House that I have had an opportunity to review the statement made by the minister and can find nothing out of order.

## VISITORS

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's my pleasure to welcome constituents of mine who are visiting Queen's Park for the first time: Camil and Lise Piché, accompanied by my wife, Gisèle.

Mr Piché has given over 30 years of his leisure time to minor hockey in Embrun. He also organized, in 1970, the largest minor hockey tournament in our country. Welcome to Mr Piché.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just an introduction of two Hamiltonians: Jeff Ballantyne from Hamilton Health Sciences Corp and Judy Mintz, my favourite Tory/Liberal in the whole country.

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity as well to welcome and introduce two directors of the Toronto Police Association who are in our gallery: Tom Foude and Terry Nunn. Welcome.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's my pleasure to introduce Patricia Bregman and Neil McGregor, who are with the Canadian Mental Health Association. What they observe here today will no doubt appear in publications for many months to come.



**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it a point of order?

Let me listen carefully for this point of order now.

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask all members to join me in welcoming the grade 10 civics students from a great high school in my riding, the home of the Huskies, Stratford Northwestern Secondary School, who are in both galleries.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask the House to join me in welcoming two members from Mississauga West paying their first visit to this House, Bruce and Janice Fligg, who participated in a fundraising drive on behalf of the Dam to aid youth in our riding. They are sitting here in the visitors' gallery. I'd like you to welcome them.

1410

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** Hopefully you'll want to join me to welcome the Ontario Student Trustees Association. They are here with us in the gallery. They're coming from across the province to attend this session.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** So nobody feels unwelcome, I'd like to welcome all those people that weren't mentioned earlier.

**The Speaker:** Since we're in the festive season and since we have put away points of order, does anybody else want to welcome anybody else? Even those we have missed.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of cell phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation de téléphones cellulaires et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Should the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have got it.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** As many members here would know—and new members, this is, I think, the fourth time I've introduced this bill. It really addresses the broader issue of driver distraction. It also prohibits

the use of hand-held cellphones while operating a motor vehicle. People know that it's a privilege to operate a motor vehicle and have a drivers license. It's not a right. Our responsibility is to keep our eyes on the road, our hands on the wheel and our mind on the job.

I should indicate that I've spoken to Minister Takhar about this legislation and would be happy to see it become government legislation. I know Mr Takhar cares very much about road safety, but this is simply the right thing to do now, and I ask the minister to make this government legislation.

## ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr Cameron Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** This bill, as I stated earlier in statements, replaces sections of the Electricity Act. A distributor of electricity in Ontario is prohibited from shutting off the distribution of electricity during the period that begins on November 11 and ends on March 31, of the following year, or during any other period described by regulation.

A distributor that shuts off the distribution of electricity during a period in which it is prohibited from doing so must restore the distribution without charge and compensate any person who suffers a loss as a result of this prohibited shutoff of their hydro during winter.

## GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Mr Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising / Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Phillips?

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** I'm honoured to introduce the Government Advertising Act as part of our pledge to deliver positive change for Ontario. The bill, if passed, would fulfill our commitment to ban partisan advertising, and I will be speaking more fully about this during ministers' statements.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** It's an honour to stand before the Legislature this afternoon. Today, as part of our pledge to deliver positive change, I introduced groundbreaking legislation, legislation we believe is the first of its kind in North America and perhaps in the world. The Government Advertising Act, 2003, if passed, will ban partisan government advertising.

This legislation is the central part of our democratic renewal initiative. It's a priority of this government and, if I may say, it's a high priority of our Premier, who spoke strongly, often during the campaign and before, against partisan government advertising during his days in opposition.

This bill helps fulfill a pledge he made and we made to work to restore public faith in our democratic institutions, to strengthen our democracy, to make government more accountable, transparent and fiscally responsible.

Partisan government advertising is the expensive, paid advertising on television, radio, billboards and in print that is used to promote politicians and political parties instead of informing the public. Partisan advertising cost taxpayers millions of dollars under the previous government. This kind of waste must stop. Under this bill, if passed, this waste will stop.

If this legislation is passed, the days of finding a glossy partisan booklet in your mailbox, a glossy booklet that your tax dollars paid for, would be gone for good.

Let me provide some details of this groundbreaking bill.

First, the Government Advertising Act, 2003, would, if passed, require the office of the Provincial Auditor to pre-screen proposed government advertising. We are confident that the Provincial Auditor as an independent officer of the Legislature is best suited to take on this role.

The proposed legislation includes strict standards the auditor would apply in the review of advertising. The ad must be a reasonable means to accomplish the following: to inform the public about policies, programs or services; to inform the public of their rights and responsibilities; to encourage or discourage specific social behaviours; to promote Ontario, or any part of it, as a good place to live, work, invest or study. Those are standards. All ads must include a statement that they were paid for by the government of Ontario.

The bill also dictates that a primary objective of the ad must not be to foster a positive impression of a governing party or a negative impression of any person or group critical of the government.

As well, under the proposed legislation, the name, voice or image of members of the executive council

could not appear in advertising directed at an Ontario audience.

The bill does exclude certain items such as advertising in respect of urgent health or safety issues or advertising required by law. We want the government to be accountable, but we don't want to interfere with the government's need to communicate urgent information to the public in a timely manner.

What is critical is that any advertisement deemed by the Provincial Auditor to promote partisan interest would never see the light of day and the auditor's decision would be final.

**1420**

To strengthen awareness and compliance with this bill we will develop a code of conduct in advertising to apply to all ministers, including their ministries and their staff. We will let the public judge us.

The Provincial Auditor will report on any examples of non-compliance with this bill in his or her annual report to the Legislature. He or she will also report on the total cost of advertising, subject to this legislation, and paid for by taxpayers, so that Ontarians know how their advertising dollars are being spent.

Every dollar spent on partisan advertising is a dollar less for our classrooms, our health care system and our water inspectors. Every dollar spent on partisan advertising is a dollar wasted. This must stop and this will stop.

With this bill we are taking our government in a new and better direction. We are delivering real, positive change. Further, we're taking an important step forward in renewing our democracy by bringing greater transparency and accountability to everything we do as a government.

In closing, we are putting principle and public interest over partisanship in introducing this groundbreaking legislation. I would urge all members to support this important legislation.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow a representative from the third party to speak for up to five minutes in response to the ministerial statement.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's a pleasure to respond to Mr Phillips, who, over the last number of years, I've had the privilege of working with on committee. I'm pleased to see him in the new role as Chair of Management Board. I'm a little surprised he's not in finance, but that's between him and the Premier.

In specific terms, I'm alarmed that this is a good example where communications are an important asset and responsibility of government. In this case here, I should tell you that I found out about this about an hour ago; in fact, it was delivered here in the House. So the opportunity to respond in context is somewhat at a disadvantage. It's a good example of government not advising people of the importance of—



*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** When the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet was giving his statement, it was very quiet on this side and they listened attentively. I expect the same courtesy to be offered to the member for Durham, who is making the response.

**Mr O'Toole:** The overall impression that was implied here was that there was some misuse of government money. I want to set the record straight. If one looks at the history here—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr O'Toole:** Thank you for that reaction. They knew that I would come up with the numbers. If I look to the history—with the very brief time I had, I looked at between 1985 and 1990. The average spending on advertising by the then Liberal government under Peterson—it's your brother, I think—\$71.2 million. If I look at the NDP—there are so few of them left—how effective was the advertising when they spent \$70 million? And between 1995 to 2000—

**Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland):** Look what happened to you.

**Mr O'Toole:** That's an excellent question, Lou. Between 1995 and 2001, we spent \$58.3 million. The point I'm making here is the advertising was effective because you listened.

I can tell you that it's important for governments to communicate with the people of Ontario. There were a number of important changes that were implemented during our term of government. Many of the changes were well needed and were overlooked for a long time.

When you think of the important initiatives that our government brought forward, and the free flu vaccine is just one example, it's important to inform the people that these are measures the government is taking—not to mention SARS, West Nile and BSE. To notify Ontario citizens of important changes like education changes and reform in health care and our new university expansion—these are appropriate communications which the people of Ontario, at the end of the day, are actually paying for.

As a matter of fact, upon further examination of the brief remarks made by Mr Phillips, it appears there may indeed be some loopholes here—I knew if I looked long enough. I only hope they don't retain the former auditor of the province to perform this function. It sounds to me like the auditor may not be the person; it may be some other appointed person, which again would remind me of—

**Interjection:** John Manley.

**Mr O'Toole:** Well, it sort of reminds me of the Radwanski federal privacy commissioner kind of appointment, heaven forbid.

I will say there are important initiatives the government should advertise, and if they don't, they're denying people access to information.

If you look at his second statement, he says the executive council would not appear in advertising directed at Ontario audiences. This would leave the impression that

you'll be advertising in Buffalo or New York. In fact, Mr McGuinty probably started it yesterday while trying to ring the bell at the New York Stock Exchange, which again was an abysmal failure.

Mr Speaker, you have my assurance that we'll be keeping a close eye on not just Mr Phillips but on this government as they go forward. We've had two evidences today of broken promises with Bill 2, which is a record tax increase of \$4.1 billion, as well as breaking their promise on the electricity charge. Next week we'll be dealing with a broken promise on auto insurance. We should be advertising about your broken promises.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On behalf of New Democrats, I want to draw the attention of people across Ontario to yet another loophole in legislation, a loophole so large you could drive a convoy of Mack trucks through it.

I remember when sanctimonious Liberals used to stand in this House and say of the former Conservative government that their advertising on Buffalo television, on Detroit television and on CNN was the crack cocaine of partisan political advertising, that it was the most egregious misuse of government money and that it certainly should be outlawed. Yet when we look at this bill, subsection 6(2), what does it say? It says that none of this applies if the advertising is directed at an audience outside Ontario, which means that the people of Ontario—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hampton:** I don't think the Liberals want to hear this.

**The Speaker:** Stop the clock. I'll give you your time.

This front bench is really noisy today. I'd like to hear the member for Kenora-Rainy River's response.

**Mr Hampton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think the Liberals are a bit upset at learning of this loophole.

What it means is that the people of Ontario will be treated to partisan advertising on CNN, on their favourite Buffalo channel, and of course they'll be able to say, "Oh, that doesn't apply under the law."

Secondly, there are some even bigger loopholes here. I remember when Liberals used to rant that if the former government wanted to put partisan advertising on, then the Conservative Party should pay for it. I was looking for a section in this bill that said that if the Speaker found that some of the government's advertising was partisan, the Liberal Party would pay for it. Is that there? No, it isn't. In fact, there is no penalty section whatsoever in this bill. All the auditor gets to do is to say in his huge report on one page that the government has breached the rules on partisan advertising, but there is no penalty whatsoever.

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This is yet again a government that says they're practising democratic renewal, but there are enough loopholes in this legislation—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Hampton:**—that you could drive several convoys of Mack trucks through it.

Speaker, I want to note something else. As I read the legislation, this takes you entirely out of the picture. If a member of the Legislature wants to rise on a point of order or a point of privilege from now on, and argue that a government ad is partisan, you have been taken completely out of the picture. In other words, we won't be able, as opposition members, to raise that point because it says specifically this is now under the ambit and the authority of the auditor. Speaker, I think you should be very concerned with this legislation because it effectively takes away your capacity to say, for example, that partisan legislation is an affront to the Legislature or an affront to the members of the House.

In concluding, I want to say to people across Ontario, what is the difference between this much-ballyhooed bill, this most boasted bill, and what the Conservatives were able to do? Not much at all.

The auditor can find that an ad is partisan, but he can't do anything about it. He can't order it to be struck from television. All he can do is say in his report that on page such-and-such the Liberal government breached the rule against partisan advertising. Will the Liberal Party be forced to pay for advertising if it's found partisan? No. Will the Liberal government be prohibited from advertising on American television that just happens to slip over the border and engage Ontario audiences? No.

All of the things the Liberals used to complain about with respect to the Conservatives remain in this bill, but at least the Conservatives were honest enough to say that they were engaging in partisan advertising. Not so with this outfit.

**The Speaker:** Let me see if I can set the tone for the next session of this Parliament now.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** The member from Kenora-Rainy River, please come to order. Thank you so much. It's so kind of you.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### HEALTH CARE REFORM

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** My question is to the Minister of Health. Two weeks ago you stood in this House and introduced Bill 8, Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, under the guise of eliminating two-tier and creeping privatization. What you did not say to the people in the province of Ontario was that this bill was going to limit their access to health care, made no guarantee regarding wait times, and contained very dangerous breaches of privacy rights that allow you, the minister, to collect, use and disclose personal information.

I would say to the minister, did you not understand the consequences of this bill, or were you trying to keep from

the people in this province the fact that this bill, rather than committing to the future of medicare, was going to seriously undermine your government's commitment to medicare? Because that's what the stakeholders and the lawyers are saying now: you put that in jeopardy.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to a question from the member and tell her that the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, Bill 8, demonstrates very much our commitment to the future of medicare.

You talk about wait times. Wait times are going to be dealt with by the Ontario Health Quality Council and dealt with by the actions of this government. In part, our support for the National Health Council deals with this issue.

With respect to the bill, it is a comprehensive bill. Unlike your government, which jammed every bill through without the opportunity for consultation, without the opportunity for any work at committee, what we've committed to, right from the get-go, and what I've had the opportunity to convey to some stakeholders this week, is our very strong determination to work with the committees of this Legislature to ensure that the legislation that comes forward that we would propose to this House be passed at third reading will be a bill which all members of the House can be proud of.

**Mrs Witmer:** I would remind the minister opposite that, as minister, you have an obligation to understand the consequences of legislation that is being introduced. It now appears that this Bill 8 has serious drafting errors. I would just say to you that it does contain provisions which would permit you, as minister, to collect, use and disclose personal information. You know that this constitutes fundamental breaches of privacy rights and should immediately be withdrawn. Are you prepared to do so?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I'll remind you that you're the minister who did just that. The fact is, your government failed when you were the government in bringing forward privacy legislation, and you'll see no such failure from our government. We'll be moving forward with legislation that will adequately protect the health privacy of Ontarians. That's a commitment that I offer to the government which failed to do so when you had the honour of being the government in this province. We will fulfill that obligation as we attempt to clean up the very many messes that you, as Minister of Health, were responsible for.

**Mrs Witmer:** I would remind the minister opposite that he is now responsible. You promised throughout the election campaign that you were going to improve accessibility to health care. You committed to the future of medicare.

We now learn, as we read from the Ontario Hospital Association legislative update, that indeed you are restricting accessibility to health care services. You are making no commitment with respect to wait times. By removing the requirement of the minister acting in the



public interest, the minister is less accountable to the public in ensuring the accessibility of health services in the community where the hospital is located. This is a serious breach of a key principle in the Canada Health Act. Why did you not, before you introduced this bill, understand the consequences of what your bill will do?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I say to the honourable member that the responsibility for determining the consequences of the bill are not to be determined only by you standing in your place and reading from a stakeholder's representation.

I've committed to the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association and other stakeholders our commitment to work with them, through the committee phase of this bill, to make sure the bill that is presented back for final passage upon recommendation of that committee to this Legislature will be a bill of which all members can be proud.

If the member has very certain and specific recommendations that she'd like to make, I would ask her to pass those along. We will take a good look at them and make sure the committee does as well, making sure we deliver to the people of this province a commitment to the future of medicare which builds on the principles of the Canada Health Act, which includes accountability, and which includes the Ontario Health Quality Council, which will be a very important opportunity for Ontarians to see just how their health care system is performing.

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#### VIDEO CAMERAS IN POLICE VEHICLES

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** My question today is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you and your community safety minister connected the placement of video cameras in police cars with racial profiling. Our government was in the process of piloting cameras in cars as an officer safety issue, not to identify police officers as bigots. There are 365 days in the year, and your minister chose to make the video camera announcement on exactly the same day the Human Rights Commission report came out.

Premier, you and your minister have tarnished the reputation of each and every police officer in this province by suggesting that this pilot is linked to racial profiling. Will you apologize in this House to the men and women in blue who put their lives on the line 24 hours a day for you, your family, and every other citizen in this province?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member for his question. I want to begin by cautioning the member opposite against using this issue as a way to exploit what could be a very controversial and divisive matter. I want to begin as well by thanking our police officers, who day in and day out put their lives on the line to protect the public safety and the well-being of our families.

This is not about taking sides; it's about finding ways to make progress. I had an opportunity earlier today to

speak with Chief Fantino. I've invited him to sit down with us. We're not going to be caught up in some kind of exchange through the media. We think it's important to sit down together, to allow cooler heads to prevail, and to ensure that we work together to build a strong, caring society.

**Mr Dunlop:** Premier, I can't stress enough how disrespectful it is for police officers to be unfairly linked to racial profiling. Here's a quote from Brian Adkin, president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, which appeared in the press release your minister was bragging about just yesterday. One thing he didn't say was that the headline of the press release said, "Ontario Provincial Police Association Warns Against Police Profiling."

I'd like to read a comment that Mr Adkin made from the press release. It says, "The commission asks Ontarians to accept as a fact the existence of systemic 'racial profiling' and suggests that policemen and women are among its greatest perpetrators. We reject this, and suggest that the commission itself is contributing to 'police profiling': the belief that police unfairly target lawbreakers only if they are members of visible minorities. This is not true and is very offensive to my members."

Furthermore, my staff member spoke to Brian Adkin just this afternoon, and he told her that the OPPA agrees with the installation of cameras in police cruisers solely for officers' safety and obtaining evidence. Premier, why is your government trying to—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you. When I stand, I would like you to sit, because you have run out of time asking your question.

Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I know the minister is very eager to speak to this issue.

**Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services):** The member is trying to imply things that aren't there. Just so you'll know, Commissioner Norton's report suggested that police cars should be equipped with video cameras. All I responded to was the fact that we are starting a pilot project that will put 12 cameras into Kenora and 22 into Toronto. This is the OPP. That is all the comment was about. I had no comment to make about racial profiling.

But you should also know that Chief Algar of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police supports this position. Chief Bevan of Ottawa supports this position. The chiefs of police of Ontario support this position. It's a situation where it is deemed to be an effective police tool. It is there for the safety of the police officers as well as the safety of the citizens who interact with them. It is a safety measure only, and it has nothing to do with the implications that you're putting forward.

**Mr Dunlop:** It's funny; we didn't actually make that link. The link came from those two people over there.

Our government spent eight years supporting police officers, building their morale and their confidence. Are you trying to destroy the morale of police officers before Christmas of this very season?

**Hon Mr Kwinter:** You should know, if you've followed any of the reports, that I have been very supportive of the police. I can tell you that I also had a conversation with Chief Fantino this afternoon. He understands exactly that we are supportive of the police. We respect what they do. They put their lives on the line every day for the citizens of Ontario. We support them. We want to make sure that we prevent them from being in harm's way, and this is one of the ways of doing it.

### SAFE SCHOOLS LEGISLATION

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday you chose to make a comment on racial profiling in the school system and the merits of the Safe Schools Act. You said, "The problems stem from school principals not using proper discretion before expelling a student, not with the act itself."

School principals in Ontario, Minister, demonstrate exemplary leadership in education. They held an excellent conference in Toronto recently. I understand you attended, and I attended as well. They had a principals' day here at Queen's Park. I assume you hold the same degree of respect for principals in Ontario that we do, and I assume that you would not make such a blanket, serious accusation without clear and compelling evidence.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Flaherty:** What is that clear and compelling evidence in support of your accusation against all principals in Ontario?

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** I say back to the member opposite that you are not referencing the comments I made in any fashion related to what I said on the subject. In fact, I talked about and was asked about the Safe Schools Act, referenced twice in the last two days, once to do with people with special needs, the other to do with allegations of racial profiling. I said we have no statistics on racial profiling; we have nothing to say on that subject.

On the subject of sometimes people with special needs being put in a situation of leaving classrooms, of having to leave schools, there are exemptions allowed under the act, very clearly, to exempt them. Sometimes, for example, certain syndromes have children swearing and that is actually part of their disability, and yet the Safe Schools Act, if strictly applied, could cause them to leave. That is the comment I made and that's a comment we are exploring with the principals' associations. I met with each of the principals' associations in the last few weeks and we are working closely together for the betterment of students in this province.

**Mr Flaherty:** Minister, I did not hear the clear and compelling evidence, in fact I heard no evidence, in support of what you said. What you said was, and I will quote it again, not what you just were talking about. You were asked about minority students and you said, "The problems stem from school principals not using proper discretion before expelling a student, not with the act

itself." Will you apologize to the principals of Ontario for that accusation?

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** To the member opposite, again he insists on trying to find some kind of aspersion that doesn't exist. There are no statistics that our ministry keeps—

**Mr Flaherty:** Why did you say that?

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** Member, if you want to hear the answer, I'm happy to give it to you. You may not like it because you want to exploit situations. You haven't stood up yet in this House, member, for public education or for anybody in it.

As the minister, what we say back to you, member, is we do not subscribe to your politics of phony division, of phony attacks on people. We have principals and teachers in this province prepared to reckon with their issues, with any problems they have, and we're prepared not to cast aspersions on them and not to reinforce any cast by the member opposite, but instead to work with them. My office spoke to each of the principals' associations this morning to make sure there was no misunderstanding, and I can assure this House that there is none on the part of the principals of this province, being perpetrated by the member.

### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale):** My question is to the Chair of Management Board. For the past eight years the Harris-Eves government has spent tens of millions of dollars every year on partisan government advertising. That money should have gone to our classrooms, to our health care system, to our water inspectors and to transportation. My constituents, the constituents of Willowdale, do not want their money wasted on self-promotional advertising. They want it stopped. Minister, will your bill absolutely ensure that partisan government advertising is a thing of the past?

1450

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** I thank the member from Willowdale for his question. Let me be very clear, because there was some confusion in the response to the bill. All advertising, whether it's run in Ontario or run in the United States or run in China, must be pre-cleared by the Provincial Auditor. None of it can run until it's pre-cleared, and the auditor must certify that the advertising is not partisan, regardless of where it runs. He must measure it against the clear criteria we've laid out here. It must not run—and he will not allow it to run—if the primary objective is to advance the reputation of the governing party. Wherever it runs, the ad has to be cleared by the Provincial Auditor, and if it's partisan in any way, it won't run regardless of where it is.

**Mr Zimmer:** Minister, the leader of the New Democratic Party seems to have some concerns about this bill. He claimed that this bill would allow broadcast of taxpayer-funded government advertising on American television. Whether it is CTV or CNN, partisan govern-



ment advertising is wrong. Minister, will your bill outlaw broadcasts of partisan government ads on American television?

**Hon Mr Phillips:** Again, just so the public is clear—and I'd urge the public to judge this bill against what the government did for eight years, spending \$40 million a year on advertising—no ad can run, wherever it is, if it's partisan. The independent Provincial Auditor has the criteria for laying it out. The public should be aware of this. It will be submitted to the Provincial Auditor. Someone said, "Will you pay back the money that you spent on it?" You can't run it. It can't run, so no money will be spent on it. Let's recognize that this is groundbreaking legislation. Nowhere in the world has this kind of legislation. It's time that we put a stop to the partisan advertising that we've seen for so many years here in Ontario.

### HYDRO RATES

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** My question is to the Premier and it's about his broken promise to maintain a rate cap for consumer protection in Ontario. Earlier today I raised in the House the story of Mr and Mrs Hawkins, who are facing a 32% increase in their hydro. Mrs Hawkins is being sustained by life-sustaining equipment that runs on electricity 24 hours a day. This woman will die without being able to have sufficient electricity and affordable electricity in her home.

Premier, a year ago on CFRB you said, "We have to maintain the rate of relief for consumers. I have had the terrible responsibility to raise horror stories in the Legislature, people who have been put in a desperate position because they simply can't afford to pay their hydro. So we've got to maintain this rate relief for our ratepayers."

My question to you is this: Why is it that on October 2, after all the ballots were counted, you dropped the hands of the Hawkins family on Main Street and parked your new-found compassion on Bay Street, with the distribution companies in this province?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I will refer this matter to the Minister of Energy.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** With respect to the individual case, if the member would provide me with the details, I will have a look at it.

First of all, the new price won't kick in until April 1, so we'll have time to look at the individual case and make adjustments. Number 2, the way we've structured this is to deal specifically with people in these types of situations. Number 3, I would suggest to the member that indeed for those people who require electricity for life-supporting systems such as his constituent, such as my mother for instance who has the same situation, I would submit that it's important that we have supply of energy. With the artificial price cap, it was making it virtually impossible to attract any new generation into Ontario.

So I'll look at the individual case. The price regime we have looked at is designed specifically to ensure that

people like the family you raised are not negatively impacted. The Premier's very clear direction was to make sure that we have a regime that does take those issues into account. This government is showing compassion for people like that, something your government never did.

**Mr Jackson:** The protection was put in our legislation, which you are now cancelling. Yesterday you instructed your Liberal members to vote against the amendments that we brought in that would protect the Hawkins family. And in public hearings you actually suggested—in your mother's case—that there should be more charitable organizations to help out people in the community. That's on the record.

Again, the Premier should be aware that his high-priced consultant who told him that the accumulated cost of the cap has been \$800 million—would the Premier be aware of the fact that \$655 million had been spent last year, paid for, and the books were balanced. This year, the current rate cap is projected to cost only \$100 million to \$120 million. The fact is, you have a bill this week that will generate \$800 million more by increasing taxes, and yet you could protect consumer in this province for \$130 million, because the cap is working, and you know it's going to work. This is about a billion dollars you're going to give to distribution companies. It's about your friends on Bay street; you've abandoned your friends on Main street.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Just to set the record straight, first of all, Mr Peters, the former Provincial Auditor, indicated that the costs going forward for this year were \$223 million, not the figure Mr Jackson outlined.

To suggest that this would be revenue neutral is just to be in la-la land. The way the price cap was struck by the previous government it will be impossible, because under their plan, we would be continuing to subsidize those retailers at a higher price. Therefore, we can project with certainty that there was no revenue neutrality associated with their proposal, even if market rates were to have dropped. What we're doing is getting rid of a bad piece of public policy that needed to be changed in order to ensure the future supply of electricity in this province. I regret that the member opposite's amendments didn't pass, but the fact is, their policy failed this province and we're fixing it. We've changed direction once and for all.

### CLASS SIZE

**Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga):** My question is directed to the Minister of Education. In a letter received by my office, Brampton resident Cathy Allen expressed her deep concern with the issue of class sizes in Ontario. Ms Allen writes that she had previously brought the issue to the attention of the former member for my riding and that he had expressed concern over the issue. During a subsequent conversation with Ms Allen, that same member again agreed that something needed to be done to rectify the situation.

However, in spite of the fact that a cabinet minister in the previous government privately expressed repeated

concerns over a situation that they had both created and continued to make worse, that government failed to take meaningful action to address the over-crowding in Ontario's classrooms.

During the campaign, I, along with many of my colleagues, campaigned forcefully on the issue of class size in Ontario. Could the Minister of Education please let us know what actions our government will take to remedy this problem that the previous regime created with their callous attitude toward our schools and our children in the province?

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** I certainly want to say that we're prepared to address this issue as one of our most important priorities. This is an issue that we hope we can get an agreement on from all sides of the House. We cannot afford to have children to get lost in the crowd any longer. They need the one-on-one attention that comes with the pledge that we're making, and will be fulfilling, to have class sizes brought down to 20 children in primary grades, in the grades where all the research tells us we can make a difference in the lives of the children—in Ms Allen's class and in classes all across the province.

What we're saying is that this measure is important. In fact, we're working right now with the schools and school boards to plan exactly how it's going to be implemented, because we can't afford to delay in making sure that the students of the province have the advantage that small class size will bring them.

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**Mr Dhillon:** Minister, it's good to know that you're taking some action, but this is only one step. What else are you going to do to improve early education for the children in my riding?

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** We are looking at a range of measures. Unfortunately, not properly observed by previous governments was the fact that it's in the early years that we can make a difference that lasts for a lifetime. We believe that the early years class size cap will actually pay for itself by the time the kids graduate because there are higher achievement rates associated with those conditions. There are lower dropout rates, there are fewer discipline problems and better access for parents.

We will be training teachers to take advantage of the lower class sizes. We will be working with them on special remedial programs and other measures to improve literacy and numeracy in the early years. We will, in short, be doing what everyone has known for years is absolutely needed to advantage kids in this province, that has been taking place now in 20 US states, in Alberta, in BC and Quebec. Finally there's a government in Ontario that's going to pay attention to the needs of these kids and give the advantage that they need to succeed in the world.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is for the Minister of Finance. Your government plans to repeal

the equity in education tax credit. Not only that, but they plan to do that retroactively. This is mean-spirited, draconian and outright hurtful to so many hard-working families across Ontario. This government falsely claims that the EETC drains money from the publicly funded schools.

Let's examine that in the case of Ms Lubna Ashraf, who lives in Mississauga. A single mother with two children, she pays all of her school taxes to support the public school system. Then she goes into her own pocket, with an annual income of \$35,000, sends both her daughters, Maryam in grade 1 and Mehreen in grade 3, to the Isna Islamic School. She budgeted this year based on the tax credit, based on the law of Ontario. Now, just before the holiday season, you propose to destroy that budgeting of a single mother with an income of \$35,000 a year. How can you justify that?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I can understand the former minister, now the member from Whitby-Ajax, asking that question because he was the author of the private school tax credit. He promoted it, notwithstanding that his Premier was against it, notwithstanding that the then Minister of Education was against it.

We made it very clear from the moment the bill was introduced that our priority was public education. We showed that priority, even within the first two months of government, when we announced \$112 million in public education for those most vulnerable and most at risk within the public system.

**Mr Flaherty:** This is another broken promise. This promise was to eliminate the tax credit for what they call "exclusive private schools." This is the exclusive "private school" that Ms Ashraf sends her two children to. What an inaccurate statement to the people of Ontario. You are accomplishing this, though: The only people in Ontario who will be able to send their children to independent schools will be rich people. Forget about the working families of Ontario that these Liberals used to talk about, caring about the working families in Ontario. There are 850 independent schools in this province; two thirds of them are attended by low- and modest-income families and their children.

They pay all their education taxes. Now you want to go into their pocket retroactively and deny them the right to send their children to Muslim schools, Jewish schools and Christian schools. It's wrong. You should not do this retroactively. How can you justify that?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax that he now has the luxury of having it all ways. The other day he was arguing in this House that if we just rolled up our sleeves we'd be able to balance the budget this year. When we keep a campaign commitment to kill that independent school credit—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Could I hear the minister's response? Thank you.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** When we bring in measures that start to put our financial house back in order, my friend



from Whitby-Ajax starts complaining. I would just tell him that when I took the oath of office to do this job, it was my commitment to get Ontario's financial house back in order. I tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax that is a one-way street we will continue down until we succeed.

### HEALTH CARE REFORM

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I ask for unanimous consent to ask a question on behalf of New Democrats.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Mr Hampton:** My question is for the Premier. Today, hundreds of people who care deeply about medicare and about public hospitals came to Queen's Park to protest, because they see no difference between your Liberal P3 hospitals and the Conservative P3 hospitals. In fact, they held what they called the betrayal lunch, and here's the menu: three pea soup; "Et tu, Dalton?" Caesar salad; chicken à la Dalton; and for dessert, waffles.

Premier, explain to those people who work on the front lines of our hospitals and who know there is no difference between Liberal P3 hospitals and Conservative P3 hospitals why you broke your promise to end the construction of P3 hospitals in Ontario.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** If the leader of the NDP doesn't understand the distinction between the publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable hospitals that we have put in place, in contrast to what the former government put in place, then he's losing something which I believe is very clear to the people of Ontario. The people in Ottawa and in Brampton are delighted on two fronts: They are getting their desperately needed hospitals, and those hospitals will be publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable.

**Mr Hampton:** Well, Premier, here's the only difference I see: The Conservatives designed a concept that would be a 25-year lease-purchase, financed by private sector corporations that want to make lots of money on the financing, with lots of privatized services so they could make lots of money on that privatization. Your concept is, you just changed the 25-year lease-purchase into a 25-year mortgage, with private financing and lots of profits made on the private financing, and all kinds of private services with lots of profits made on those. At the end, the taxpayers of Ontario pay double, because it's essentially a private hospital.

Premier, if you think there's a difference, then table today in the Legislature the complete scheme for the hospital in Brampton and the hospital in Ottawa. Your Minister of Health said he would do that; he hasn't done it yet. If you think this isn't a P3 hospital, table the documents here today.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** It's interesting to hear from the leader of the NDP, a party that has its hands all over the 407 privatization deal that has continued to take advantage of Ontario motorists, that he fails to understand the concept of public title. The public continues to own the

hospitals. We think that is very important, not only to the citizens of Ontario, but to the people of Ottawa and the people of Brampton. Let me say on behalf of our party and our government that we are proud of these hospitals; we are proud of the fact that we've been able to move ahead with them. Those hospitals will be built and, once again, they'll be publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable.

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### HIGHWAY 410

**Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Brampton is the sixth-fastest growing city in Canada, with the annual growth rate doubling and sometimes tripling the rate of the GTA, but the infrastructure of the city is not keeping pace with the growth rate. The previous government made countless commitments to extend and complete Highway 410. A former Conservative member from Brampton assured our community that we would be driving on an expanded Highway 410 by summer 2004. Well, as has been the case with previous government promises, they were hollow. Their words have no force.

Minister, your own ministry documents state, "Existing traffic volumes to the north of present terminus of Highway 410 at Bovaird Drive result in significant congestion to the existing roadway network." We know the previous government ignored the needs of Brampton residents. Will you now commit to completing Highway 410?

**Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** First of all, I want to thank the honourable member for raising this question. I also want to thank the other members from the Brampton area for diligently following this project. Being a fellow member from the Peel region, I am very much aware of the needs of the Peel region, and I know this project is really important for the growth of the region and also to control the gridlock on the highways. Our government is prepared to move ahead with the Highway 410 project.

**Mrs Jeffrey:** Minister, I'm pleased and I'm proud that our government is committed to the construction of Highway 410. Can you please give my residents of Brampton Centre a timeline for the completion of this project.

**Hon Mr Takhar:** Let me give you some details about this project. The first phase of this project is under construction right now from Bovaird Drive to Sandalwood Parkway. We are going ahead with the design for the second phase—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. It seems to me many members here want to answer the question for him.

**Hon Mr Takhar:** For the second phase of this project we are going ahead with the design of the project. We are also moving ahead with the acquisition of the property required from the Sandalwood Parkway to Mayfield. As

a result, I will not be able to give you the exact dates for the completion of this project, but we are committed to moving ahead with this project in a fiscally responsible manner.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to make it very clear that our government announced that program in June—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I can see that the member for Oak Ridges misses his portfolio.

#### PREMIER'S VISIT TO NEW YORK CITY

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** My question is to the Premier. Mr Premier, today's National Post ran the headline "Consulate Apologizes for McGuinty Faux Pas." We've now had two consecutive days of media regarding your tale about what happened at the New York Stock Exchange. Mr Premier, 48 hours later have you yet apologized for your remarks?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I'll give it to the member opposite; he certainly has an inclination for looking for mischief where there is none to be found.

Let me say once again that I was honoured to represent the people of Ontario in my recent visit to New York City. I was privileged to meet with representatives of the financial community. I assured them that ours is a strong and growing economy. I assured them that we are tackling our challenges head on, that we have made significant headway, that we will continue to work as hard as we can.

We're rolling up our sleeves in this province today. We're not pretending that we don't have fiscal challenges the way the past government did. They were pleased—in fact they were delighted—to receive that news. I look forward to returning shortly after our first budget has been introduced to deliver still more good news to further strengthen our trading relationship with our largest trading partner.

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate your comments here in the assembly. Let me describe what I see as the problem. Your tale was described in a headline that appeared in the Kingston Whig Standard as: "McGuinty Suggests American Trade Ignorance Behind Big Apple Snub." Sadly, this fits an unfortunate pattern of behaviour by Liberal leadership and staff in Ottawa; for example, comments by Jean Chrétien, Herb Dhaliwal, Carolyn Bennett, Bonnie Brown, Françoise Ducros. These Liberals have used American-bashing to score points, and then they blame the media for blowing it out of proportion.

While you've told the assembly, the problem is that this causes accumulative damage to our relationship with our greatest trading partner.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Hudak:** Yesterday you told the assembly that your tale was inaccurate. Mr Premier, I ask you to do the right thing and begin repairing the damage where it happened and apologize to the New York Stock Exchange. Will you do the right thing?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The last time I checked, they were still trading today at the New York Stock Exchange. Life apparently is going on. I'll tell you what the real damage is that the people with whom I met were concerned about. It's the \$5.6-billion deficit. That's the damage they are concerned about. What they are looking for is a solid plan to address that damage. I have committed to them, as I have committed to the people of Ontario, that we are rolling up our sleeves, we are getting cracking, we're going to deal with this particular challenge and we're going to clean up the mess that has been left behind by the former government. At the same time, we acknowledge, recognize and champion the very strong relationship that we have with the United States of America.

#### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Now that we are on the eve of Christmas shopping, consumers everywhere will avail themselves of the purchases on credit so readily available and advertised by financial institutions and merchants. However, most consumers are not aware that every new application for credit can lower consumer credit scores and consequently consumer's credit worthiness. Amazingly, as few as three credit applications could result in the consumer getting cut off from any further credit.

Joe Cordiano introduced legislation last year to ensure that consumers are not penalized every time a report is made. Consumers need protection from this problem. My question to the minister is as follows: How will the Ontario government address this important issue?

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** I thank the honourable member for Davenport, who has a true interest in helping consumers, not just in his own riding but throughout the province of Ontario.

We recognize the importance of a well-functioning consumer reporting system in Ontario. I am pleased to report that I will take a look at Mr Cordiano's private member's bill that was introduced in the previous Parliament. I'm going to refer it to our consumers advisory committee for their input, because we believe it's a very good advisory committee set up by the former minister. We think it's appropriate that we give consumers in this province greater protection when they're applying for credit. I thank the member for his interest.

**Mr Ruprecht:** Minister, I want to raise another issue. There are thousands of consumer files corrupted by incorrect information that can result in denial of credit. Removing incorrect credit information from consumer files may be a very lengthy and tedious procedure. It may take months, even years to remove non-factual, erroneous information from consumer files. In the United States, the Fair Credit Reporting Act stipulates that disputed information must be deleted from a consumer's file if the provider of information, such as a bank, does not confirm the information within 30 days of dispute.



Our Consumer Reporting Act does not have such provisions. It simply says that erroneous information be corrected "within a reasonable time," which may be one month, six months or a year. Will you look into this matter in order to ensure that Canadian consumers can have the same rights as US citizens?

**Hon Mr Watson:** Obviously our ministry does take that issue very seriously. I don't consider one year to remove erroneous information from a credit file to be, in my view, a reasonable time. I think we can do a better job, and I will certainly work with our ministry and with the honourable member and other members of the House who have concerns about having this blotch on a credit rating. We'll get back to the honourable member early in the new year.

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#### NORTHERN TAX INCENTIVE ZONE

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I have a question for the Premier. I have previously asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines about your government's plans for northern tax incentive zones. The minister was not clear in his first attempt at an answer. What are your plans for the northern tax incentive zones?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member for the question. I am looking through my book for an appropriate answer. I can't seem to find it, but let me speak to this in the absence of the minister and say that we look forward to working with our communities in northern Ontario. I also look forward to receiving these missives sooner when I stand up.

We are reviewing the tax incentive zone initiative, I can advise the member opposite. In addition to reviewing the status of the northern zone, the government is considering the role that tax incentive zones should play in southern regions of the province. So we continue to believe it is a good idea not only for the north, but we think it might have some application in the south.

**Mr Miller:** Premier, I appreciate the answer. I'm a little disconcerted that you had to refer to your book. It should be at the top of your mind. I can't stress how important an issue this is in the north.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. The member is only expressing his concern. Would he put his question, please.

**Mr Miller:** I'd like to quote from a newspaper, from the North Bay Nugget:

"Confirmation about the Liberal government's stance on the northern Ontario's tax incentive zone, scheduled to begin January 1, was one of the chief concerns raised Wednesday at the North Bay Economic Development Commission meeting."

People in the north are very concerned about this. It was an announcement made May 9 of this year to the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities. I can tell you, it was very well received. If you talk to northerners,

they think this is a very important initiative. I hope you'll be very strong in supporting it.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Let me just say that having had the opportunity to visit the north countless times during the course of the past 13 years, but particularly in my capacity as Leader of the Opposition for some six years—they were desperate for the kind of change that we are bringing to the government of Ontario.

The former government left them behind, abdicated its responsibility. Things had gotten to such a deplorable state that they didn't even have a minister from the north who was representing the north. We have made that change, at least.

We intend to move forward with this initiative, as well as many others, because we recognize the fundamental role, a role of importance, played by our communities that are located in northern Ontario.

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Maybe my address wasn't exactly northern Ontario, but my grandfather and my great-grandfather were both—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** You're from the north, I can see. New question.

#### FLU IMMUNIZATION

**Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. My constituency office has been getting a lot of calls from people who are concerned about the latest outbreak of flu. I understand the current outbreak is the result of a strain called A-Fujian and that it may not be covered by the flu vaccine we're currently using. People have real concerns when they have senior relatives and friends and young children and are reading about the number of people who are dying from the current outbreak. What can we tell our constituents about protecting themselves against the A-Fujian strain that may not be covered by the flu vaccine?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The member raises an important question with respect to flu vaccines and the strains of flu that are present in Ontario this year.

First, it's important to note that although the Fujian strain may be present, it is not the only strain; it's not that we only have one strain of the flu. Many of the deaths that have occurred this year are not related to the Fujian strain, which underscores the essential message to Ontarians that the very best way available to protect ourselves against the flu and against the impacts of it is to get the flu vaccine, which is made available through public health in each of the 37 different public health regions in our province, or get it through their doctor.

The very best evidence and the very advice we can offer to Ontarians is to take advantage of the free flu shots, the free vaccines in the province of Ontario. This is the very best protection against any strain of the flu that's present in Ontario this year.

**Mrs Van Bommel:** My staff has certainly been encouraging all our constituents to get the flu vaccine as soon as possible. This is just the beginning of the flu season; we know it normally peaks later in the winter. Minister, can we assure our constituents that there is an adequate supply of flu vaccine available to us?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** It's important that Ontarians know that the five million vaccines that were ordered at the beginning of the year have been supplemented with an additional order of 500,000; some 250,000 of those were recently shipped to our public health partners. Ontario has a stockpile and will continue to add to that stockpile. So I give the assurance to the people and to all members that Ontarians will be adequately protected and that we will have sufficient quantities of vaccines. We have a significant stockpile on hand and will be adding to that as required. We encourage all members to do what they can to encourage Ontarians to get their flu vaccination this winter.

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it would have been very appropriate of the Minister of Health to mention that the former Minister of Health made the vaccine freely available to Ontarians.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** You could have made an excellent point if you were in your seat.

#### FOREIGN-TRAINED MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

**Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** My question is to the Minister of Health. First of all, I want to congratulate the minister and all ministers on their appointments to cabinet, as well as yourself, Mr Speaker.

My question pertains to health workers in Ontario. I have a family in my riding whom I was recently able to assist to come into the riding—into Ontario—except for one member. We had to go through the Canadian consulate in the country of origin to get the individual out. Now that the individual is here, the federal government has issued a work permit for this individual to work in a carwash. The difficulty is, it's a qualified physician. Immigration will not issue landed immigrant status to this individual until the individual goes back to the country of origin, and of course we may not get the individual back out after they've gone back.

The reason I'm asking you this question, Minister, is that the individual cannot begin processing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons until they receive landed immigrant status. Are you working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the federal government to speed up this process so we can get these people working in Ontario?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** A really essential part of the member's question is to recognize that the difficulty his constituent is having is because that individual—I don't know if it's a man or a woman—does not have landed

immigrant status, which is essentially close to the equivalent of permanent residency in our country. As such, the agreements that were built with the College of Physicians and Surgeons and with the government he was involved with do depend on meeting the minimum standard of being a landed immigrant before they can access any of the programs that have been developed to try to make sure our international medical graduates are able to be deployed into the Ontario health system.

We recognize the need to enhance this capacity. My colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration will work with our federal officials to make sure we're doing all we can to take advantage of these international medical graduates, who are so badly needed, especially in communities like the member of Oshawa's, which is currently under-resourced from this standpoint.

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**Mr Ouellette:** Minister, it's not just the physicians. Recently, the members from Durham, including a member of your own party, met with the nurses at a meeting in Oshawa. Their concern was that over the course of your mandate 6,000 nurses are going to be retiring. Your commitment was for 8,000 new nurses. How are you going to be able to fulfill those 14,000 net new nurses? Individuals from New Zealand who were at that meeting found it easier to get into Quebec and then come to Ontario. Minister, are you working with the nurses' association, and can you speed up that process as well?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** We're working with all parties, including the federal government, to speed access to the province of Ontario and to the communities of Ontario with respect to foreign-trained professionals. I will note that I also had a recent letter from the chair of Durham region, Roger Anderson, and committed to meet with him as soon as I can.

Our government made specific commitments in our platform to address the shortage of physicians and nurses. I'm very confident we're going to be able to deliver on those commitments, not the least of which is by the early work that we're going to do to make sure a much higher percentage of nurses currently practising have the opportunity of full-time employment, something I think everyone will recognize is a serious deficiency in the current environment. This is an essential piece of the foundation, to be able to encourage more people to take up nursing so that we can graduate more nurses and so that we can access more foreign-trained nurses and deploy them in the various communities in Ontario that so desperately need their help.

#### DEVELOPMENT CHARGES

**Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville):** My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. For several years, the people of Oakville have suspected that changes made to the Development Charges Act by the previous government have led to higher property taxes in Oakville. As a result of changes such as the reduction of soft services



and the exclusion of capital cost categories, many of our community facilities such as libraries, hockey rinks and transit buses are no longer covered by development charge funds.

Minister, my question is, will you look into the impact on our community facilities and public transit of the previous government's changes to the Development Charges Act?

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** I'd like to thank the member for his question. I know he's expressed his concerns, as have many other people as well, about the current status of the Development Charges Act. Those concerns regard, for example, the mandatory 10% reduction of the soft services and the exclusion of certain categories of capital costs and the required 10-year average service level standard. We're looking into the Development Charges Act right now. I've heard from many municipalities on this issue and I can assure the member that his concerns and the concerns of many other people will be taken into account when we take a look into it.

**Mr Flynn:** Thank you for the answer, Minister. Recreational facilities, libraries, public transit and public parks are vital to the Oakville community. We have seen the steady erosion of these facilities and services under the previous government. On behalf of my constituents, I request that changes be made to the Development Charges Act that will reinstate full funding for public transit and full funding for facilities at the current level, rather than at 10-year average levels. I would also request that the capital cost category be expanded to include parkland, hospitals and waste management services. Minister, will you consider my request for changes to the Development Charges Act?

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** I would like to thank the member for his supplementary as well, because this is a very important issue, particularly in the fast-growing areas of this province.

As you know, and as the members of the public may know, the Development Charges Act, 1997—it was passed that year—allows municipalities to impose levies to pay for the growth of certain capital costs such as roads, water and waste water services, and public transit. There are currently about 159 out of the 448 municipalities that are collecting development charges under the act. Some of the proposals you recommend in your question and your supplementary were part of the old Development Charges Act that existed prior to 1997. This act was subsequently changed by the province, and it's high time now that we take another look into that act to see that the people of Ontario, and the developers in Ontario especially, pay the proper charges when they develop subdivisions and the various properties—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

#### VISITOR

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take

this opportunity to introduce a special guest in the members' gallery east, the former president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and newly elected mayor of the municipality of Greenstone, Michael Power. Welcome, Michael.

#### CORRECTION OF RECORD

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was informed by the Minister of Health that I had mistakenly said Carolyn Bennett, when I was referring to Carolyn Parrish, two MPs in Ottawa. I'd like to change the record and apologize to Mrs Bennett.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you very much.

#### PETITIONS

##### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit seeks to restore equity and parental choice to Ontario's education system;

"Whereas the equity in education tax credit allows those from lower-income homes to have the same opportunities as other students;

"Whereas families who choose to send their children to independent schools have to pay twice for their children's education;

"Whereas the majority of families who benefit from the equity in education tax credit come from lower- or middle-class homes;

"Whereas the United Nations has called on the government of Ontario to remedy the inequity in the education system...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow the equity in education tax credit to continue to be the law of the land in Ontario, and allow lower- and middle-income parents the privilege to send their children to independent schools if they so choose."

I have signed my name.

##### SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty, our newly elected Premier, has publicly pledged to move quickly to re-establish local democracy when it comes to public education in Ontario; and

"Whereas Mr McGuinty has publicly asked that 'cuts and school closures' should be 'set aside' and that 'that

business' should be left for the incoming, duly elected trustees; and

"Whereas Mr Gerard Kennedy, our newly elected Minister of Education, has stated publicly that school boards aren't operating as closed shops any more; and

"Whereas there is universal support for the school amongst its staff, parents, student body and the community at large; and

"Whereas Prince of Wales Public School in Barrie is the oldest continuously operating school in Simcoe county; and

"Whereas Prince of Wales Public School has been providing the community with quality education for more than 125 years; and

"Whereas the impact of the closure of Prince of Wales would be devastating on the whole of the downtown core, and most especially the urban neighbourhood which the school serves;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Dalton McGuinty government live up to its commitment and ensure that community schools are not forced to be closed and that specifically the Liberal government will immediately halt the closure of Prince of Wales Public School in Barrie, Ontario."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

#### TUITION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Thank you very much for recognizing me on this very important petition. The students find that tuition fees have astronomically risen, and that's why the Canadian Federation of Students keeps on sending these petitions to us. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and even tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"(2) Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I agree with it wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to put my signature on this petition, and I know that other members would like to do it as well.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I have a petition in support of the independent school tax credit that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government respected the right of parents to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government passed a law providing parents with a tax credit of up to 50% of tuition to a maximum of \$3,500 once fully implemented; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now introduced a bill that will cancel this important tax credit that provides working-class parents with the ability to send their children to a school of their choice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To protect the equity in education tax credit and stop the Liberal tax hike bill from becoming law."

I affix my signature in support.

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#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

#### DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** I move, seconded by Mr Qaadri, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable James K. Bartleman:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Ms Mossop moves, seconded by Mr Qaadri, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

The member for Stoney Creek.

**Ms Mossop:** A couple of weeks ago, my knees were beginning to buckle under the weight of a wide range of new and demanding tasks. I have been on this very steep learning curve of joining the ranks of those in government and in ministries. In addition, as many of you may know, I am the very proud and besotted mother of the loveliest seven-month-old baby on the planet, and thinking that that wasn't quite enough, my husband and I



decided on Thanksgiving weekend that we would sell our home, and pack up our belongings and our memories, and move to two houses, one in Stoney Creek, in Grimsby, the riding which I represent, and the other a house in Toronto, where I can keep my family close to me while I perform my legislative duties.

It was on the eve of one of these two moves that the Premier stopped me in the doorway here. He said he would like me to give my maiden speech as part of the motion to debate the throne speech—in essence, the maiden speech of maiden speeches for this session, the honour of which was not lost on me, and I leapt at the opportunity. As I verily skipped down the hall past the marble walls with all the names of people who have gone before me etched there, I started to organize my thoughts, all the heady and weighty things I wanted to say to you all to leave a favourable, even admirable, impression—my deep desire.

I had the weekend to prepare, three days.

And then I remembered that the moving truck was coming the next morning and I imagined myself amid dozens of unpacked boxes, rocking the baby with one toe and pecking away at my keyboard, trying to come up with a speech. I wondered, maybe for a moment, if anybody would mind if I read from the phone book, something that I know has been done in the odd filibuster in parliaments like this one, and dare I say we might even hear that one again in the not too distant future.

But this is a once in a lifetime opportunity—an opportunity, I am told, to speak from the heart about the things that matter most to one. And so I took comfort in a saying borrowed from my sister, who is an artist, who raised four children and many pigs, chickens, cows, dogs and cats while baking her own bread, churning her own butter, and teaching art and art history in the riding of Leeds.

The saying is, "Neatness is for lesser mortals."

And so, in the midst of the chaos of dozens of unpacked boxes and the remnants of takeout food, I sat on the floor of one of our new homes, by the fireplace, I lit the fire and I poured a good glass of Niagara wine and got on with greater things.

I'm a storyteller by trade, so now I'm going to tell you a story. It has many characters, plots and subplots.

First and foremost, I wish to thank the people of the riding of Stoney Creek for giving me the opportunity to represent them. The people of Stoney Creek form a microcosm of the provincial population. They are farmers and business people, small and large, workers and volunteers, doctors and nurses, students and teachers; they are young and old; they were born here and they were born very far away.

Stoney Creek has a long and distinguished history as part of Upper Canada, Canada and the province of Ontario. It's a beautiful spot, boasting some of the province's most enviable natural features. Its northern boundary stretches across one of the world's greatest bodies of fresh water, Lake Ontario. It is home to some of the world's best tender fruit lands and the Niagara Escarpment.

The riding is also where I have spent my professional, volunteer and social life for more than 22 years. In 1981, I became the Niagara bureau chief for then CHCH television and my duties were to cover the stories of the day anywhere in the Niagara region. I covered everything from the Winona Peach Festival to the Love Canal crisis and its impact on the Niagara River and Lake Ontario, the source of drinking water for millions of Canadians and Americans.

I remember when the grape growers and vintners got together and put their livelihoods on the line by ripping out old wine grape varieties, risking a great deal and investing in the future by putting in new French vinifera varieties. It takes about eight years for a vine to come to maturity, so this was quite the gamble, and it has paid off. Niagara wines are now among the finest in the world.

I covered every election at every level of government. That meant interviewing politicians, from the local alderman to the mayors, regional chairs, MPPs, MPs, the Premiers and the Prime Ministers of the day. The Prime Minister was Trudeau; the Premier was Davis. The MPPs included the Honourable Bob Welch for Brock riding, the legendary Mel Swart of Welland-Thorold, the Honourable Vince Kerrio of Niagara Falls, and three members who still grace the halls of this great establishment.

First, it was the Honourable Jim Bradley of St Catharines with whom I discussed many issues over the years. But the most memorable was the government's new education policy put forth by the Minister of Education at the time, the Honourable Bette Stephenson. It was well received but it did have a few cracks in it through which was falling a small group of disadvantaged children who were developmentally handicapped. At member Bradley's behest, I produced a small, special television series examining the impact of the policy on these children and their families. The result was that we were able to stop the closure of a centre for these children which was performing a unique and, for those families, an invaluable service.

Second, I often had the opportunity to interview Mr Peter Kormos, the member for Niagara Centre. I remember well the day that his predecessor, Mr Mel Swart, resigned and handed the baton to Mr Kormos. You might even call it an anointment. But that was not the first time I interviewed our distinctive member. Whenever there was a particularly major crime in Welland, I would have cause to meet Mr Kormos. I'm not suggesting or insinuating that he had anything to do with the crime itself, but when I arrived at the Niagara Regional Police station in Welland, invariably there would be a red Corvette—I think it was a red Corvette; it was a flashy sports car anyway—parked out front of the station and a track of cowboy boots leading into the station. Those were Mr Kormos's, the criminal lawyer. I never saw him or heard him fight any fight with anything less than full gusto and spirit.

Then there was Mr Dominic Agostino, who I have followed for many years in Hamilton politics, as an alderman, as an MPP and now as the PA to the Minister



of the Environment, and a colleague on this side of the microphone instead of the other. He has been very helpful and very supportive in this great change in my life, and I thank him for that.

After a number of years in Niagara, I moved into the Hamilton television station, where I became the first female anchor at that station. So from inside the newsroom now, I covered the issues and elections in an area ranging from Oakville to Fort Erie, and also all of Ontario and Canada.

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In the role of television anchor, you are often asked to participate in charity events and fundraisers, and there is an endless list of groups that want you to come and do everything from being dunked in a dunking tank to doing the twist with the mayor or whatever it is that's needed to raise funds for something.

I had a personal interest in literacy and the importance of reading among children, and that led me to become a volunteer with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Hamilton and Burlington as an in-school mentor. I was matched with a little girl at an inner city school and followed her as she moved from crisis to crisis and school to school. This little person experienced more of the hardships that life has to offer by the age of 11 than many of us have to face in a lifetime.

She moved from Hamilton to Stoney Creek to Winona, and then she moved away from the region. Each time she moved, she would run to greet life's new challenges, the latest offering, with the enthusiasm and energy that is the core of a survivor. And in turn, she was rewarded. In a series of public schools, she met an army of teachers, principals, school staff, volunteers, and friends and their families who offered her a warm reception and a solid-as-bedrock foundation on which to lean and from which to grow. I know that for the rest of her life, wherever she is, she will look back on her days in those public schools, especially Winona Public School, and she will remember the names of so many who were there for her.

Even more recently, I had the privilege of interviewing one of Stoney Creek's heroes, Dr Bob Kemp. He has just celebrated his 90th birthday. Many residents of Stoney Creek have, in their personal histories, memories of Dr Bob coming to their homes for a house call. In addition to his physician's duties, he would blend in genuine compassion and a practical helping hand. He would often be found washing the dishes or helping with some other household chore as part of his house call—no extra charge.

Dr Bob and his wife, Mildred, have devoted their latter years to the realization of a long-held dream: the Dr Bob Kemp Hospice. Practical, compassionate programs will blend health care with soul care to ease people through their last days. The end of life is filled with enough uncertainty with its many unpleasant ways of arriving without the added fear, anxiety, discomfort and loss associated with moving from our homes to an institution.

During these many years—more than two decades—I came to know the people of the riding of Stoney Creek and they came to know me. When I knocked on their doors during the campaign it was kind of like a family reunion. I was meeting all sorts of cousins and second cousins and cousins twice-removed that I didn't know I had. We had a lot to talk about. We talked about the desperate need for more home care for seniors so they could stay in their homes, like we all want to do. We talked about the need for more nurses and more doctors. We talked about the need to create supportive and safe environments in our schools for our students and our teachers. We talked about the need for clean air and clean water, for without them we have nothing—we are lost.

When I was first approached to run for politics, I have to say I didn't have much of an appetite for it: I had little interest. After all, why on earth would anybody want to get involved in something that's akin to a blood sport? My colleagues from the other side of the microphone always ask me, "Why? Why did you do it?" Some of them ask incredulously, and I must say some of them ask a little enviously. It's always asked with that journalistic curiosity that is essential to the breed. But it was my journalistic curiosity that killed this journalist.

When I was first approached, I said I was interested, not because I had any great political ambitions but because I was so curious to know how political parties lured people into this often cut-throat business. I was offered a meeting with the then Leader of the Opposition. I had interviewed many a politician, every Prime Minister from Trudeau to Chrétien, and every Premier from Davis to Eves, but I had never met Dalton McGuinty, a man who had, through the media's filter, been seen as wanting a bit as a leader. I spent 40 minutes interviewing Mr McGuinty and I was given a glimpse of the integrity, the passion, the vision and the caring that now resides in the Premier's office.

I don't know what I had expected, a pot of gold or the lure of the life of leisure to be laid on the table in front of me, but none of that was forthcoming. Instead I was told of the need for committed and serious public servants and what being a public servant entailed. I was told that I could look forward to eating cold hot dogs late at night, far away from family and friends, and that I would be asked, and often expected—even demanded and commanded—to be at events and meetings seven days and nights a week, to solve the world's problems, and often not to be able to do so. I was told that I might feel achievement and a sense of satisfaction and reward about 10% of the time, if I was lucky. But I was also told that there was nothing better and that I would love it.

I asked Mr McGuinty what he was most proud of in his political career, what would make him look back and say, "That made it all worthwhile." He told me about a little-known private member's bill. He found out that many companies and agencies were throwing perfectly good food away while others were going hungry. The companies and agencies didn't give leftover food away because they were afraid there would be substantial



liability if anything went wrong. The private member's bill he drafted enables companies and others with good intent and in good faith to give that food to those who need it—a simple solution to help end a needless deprivation and imbalance in the supply and demand of our oh-so-very wealthy society; nothing overly glamorous, nothing that would grab any headlines.

I felt a vibration in the fibre of my being. The less celebrated contributions of people, known and not well known, are legion around the world. They are what make our civilized society civilized. Such people are in my blood.

My uncle, Bill Buchanan, started his adulthood on the front line in Italy during the Second World War. In his professional life with CN, he had a significant impact on the economy of Canada, and particularly Halifax, when he played an instrumental role in opening the land-sea container service between Canada and Britain. Prior to that, Canada was shut out and the US eastern seaboard had a monopoly.

He then moved to England with CN and, on a weekend afternoon, working on his farm in the English countryside, he experienced one of life's split-second transformations. While trimming a tree, he fell and became paralyzed from the waist down, and to this day he is in a wheelchair.

He hasn't spent the last 30 years idly. He turned his personal tragedy into public service, spearheading and overseeing the retrofitting of public buildings and carriers, making them accessible to a wide range of physically challenged people. He became the adviser to the Prince of Wales on such issues, and most recently worked on the handicapped facilities on the Chunnel service and at Buckingham Palace when it was opened to the public.

I asked him once how he balanced life's struggles. He shrugged and said, "The only thing that matters is to do something that will matter and will make a difference in 100 years."

He came by the philosophy honestly. His father—my grandfather—Dr E.V. Buchanan of London, Ontario, was Sir Adam Beck's right-hand man in bringing light and power to the people of Ontario, even to the most remote farmhouse. As general manager of the public utilities in London, my grandfather made the creation and preservation of green space—parks and playgrounds—a priority. He brought a pipeline from Lake Huron to London so that everybody could have clean, safe water to drink. When he first came from Scotland in 1910, he couldn't understand why only the rich could play golf; it was so expensive here. So he started the first inexpensive public golf course—two bits would get you nine holes. Still in existence today, the parks, the pipeline and the Thames Valley EV Buchanan golf course are being enjoyed by many, and I trust they will for many years to come.

He died at the age of 100 in University Hospital in London, a hospital he helped to build, within budget, as a member of its board of directors. To this day, I do not

know what his politics were. He never divulged his leanings.

When I look back in my family history, I see examples of public service everywhere: a distant aunt who taught the slaves to read and write in the southern states during the Civil War—I still have a vase that her students painted for her and gave to her in gratitude; a grandmother who was devoted to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; and a mother who, among other things, worked for the Kidney Foundation and opened our home to kidney patients and their families when they were coming to the big-city hospital for what were then experimental transplant operations.

#### 1600

These people and their contributions were racing through my head as I stood up to leave Mr McGuinty's office. I was definitely feeling the call to duty. My journalistic curiosity led me to the brink, but the sense of duty that courses through my family bloodlines was reeling me in.

Then Mr McGuinty said to me, "You know, there is never a good time to enter politics. There are always other things to do. It's kind of like the decision to have a family. There are a lot of sacrifices involved. There's just never a perfect time. You've just got to do it." So I nodded and wandered off.

The next day, I went to the doctor, and I found out I was expecting my first child. So, with a huge sigh of relief, I was able to reject the call to duty.

But they came back, those Liberals, just as I was settling into an uncomplicated and satisfying life of writing and rearing my baby. I said no three times. I said it was impossible to run for office with a three-and-a-half-month-old baby. But then I realized that as much as I was responsible for my baby because I brought her into this world, I was and am also responsible for the world that I have brought her into.

As I walked along the beach of Lake Huron just north of Grand Bend, gazing at the once pristine waters of that crown jewel of great freshwater lakes, I knew that I had to do it. I saw the evidence of the degradation of that great lake, and I knew that I wouldn't be able to look at myself in the mirror if I had been given a chance to do something about all the things I care about and I didn't take it. So I said yes.

Now, there were conditions, and the conditions were that I would be given some practical support in balancing the gruelling pace of a campaign and the life of politics with the tyranny of a newborn. So, parked outside of my campaign headquarters, which was an old Arby's restaurant on old Highway 8 in Stoney Creek, was a small motorhome, an RV. Inside was my family: the baby, the husband and the two dogs sometimes too. I would dash in and out and visit and nurse the baby. When we went campaigning we'd bounce and rattle off down the road, and we'd park the RV on the corner. I would run out to the doors with a cellphone in my pocket. When they needed me, I would be called and I would run back and



feed my baby, and then back to the doors. That's how we managed to do it.

I said throughout the campaign that, if elected, I would be bringing the baby to work here, and I have. I have heard a few people remark with disdain about this, but they are very few and they are living in an unrealistic bubble. Women have been taking their kids to work for centuries, for millennia in fact—when they fetched the water, when they worked in the fields, when they ironed their husband's shirts, when they built offices in their homes, their kids were and are with them. When I bring her to work, I know where she is, I know I can get to her quickly, and I'm able to focus fully on my work. I have been helped in doing this by my family, friends, co-workers and colleagues. We have made my dual responsibilities workable, a win-win situation, by being flexible and creative. This is a common sense approach and should be adopted in workplaces everywhere.

There are spinoff benefits to bringing a baby to work. Whenever I walk down the halls with her in my arms, the smiles replace the clouds on faces, offers of help and advice abound, party lines dissolve and human interaction is warm and real.

I have to thank everyone I have met and who has been so helpful and so kind over the last few months—from the many wonderful volunteers on the campaign, to all my colleagues here, to the many people who work inside this building, from the office of the Sergeant at Arms to the library, to the Clerk's office, to Hansard, to our translators, our pages and others. For the most part, they are people I had never met before.

As I mentioned the other night during one of our debates, it's a little bit like being Harry Potter at Hogwarts Academy. In this magical, mystical, beautiful building with its hidden transoms, its huge halls, intricate craftsmanship and immense history, people decked out in their long black robes scurry along. They seem to know us all by name and a little bit about us. They pile us down with books and binders and instructions, and they are always there to give us a helping hand. My admiration and appreciation go to you all.

I am proud to be part of such a remarkable team. I'm awed and I am gratified to find that the spirit of public service is alive and well here, and while in my time here I may not succeed in leaving a lasting legacy, I do hope that I will at least help forge a link in a lasting chain of events that will bring about a change or development that will make the lives of those now and in the future better or will preserve for those in the future a piece of this very spectacular province.

I have travelled much of the world and I have travelled much of this province, and we live in one of the richest, most naturally beautiful places in the world. We should revel in it; we should fawn over it. It's stunning and it's wondrous, and we must conserve it and preserve it.

Pour terminer, j'aimerais à nouveau remercier les habitants de Stoney Creek de m'avoir fait confiance et de m'avoir donné la possibilité de les représenter. Lorsque

je quitterai mes fonctions, j'espère que l'on se souviendra de moi comme quelqu'un qui a bien servi ses électeurs. Les habitants de Stoney Creek le méritent. C'est le mandat dont ils m'ont chargée.

Je dois me montrer à la hauteur de mon prédécesseur, l'honorable Brad Clark, qui a travaillé dur pour ses électeurs, et je sais qu'il continuera de le faire.

Durant la campagne en septembre, j'ai eu l'honneur de disputer la course non seulement aux côtés de M. Clark, mais également de la candidate du NPD, Lorrie McKibbin, et du candidat du Parti Vert, Richard Safka. Ils ont consacré énormément d'énergie et de temps, et je les félicite de leurs contributions à notre démocratie.

When I am awakened in the middle of the night by the needs of my baby, my mind worries over my decision to enter politics. I wonder if I have made a grave personal or professional error. Did I suddenly abandon a life I had worked so hard for, a dream I had held so dear? For what? An ideal or a shadow, or something in between, something of more substance? I hope, more than anyone, that I have not been in error.

My name will in future be etched in the marble inside this building, and it will be a measure of our success as participants in the democracy of this House if that marble remains intact and is not, like in so many other corners of the world, reduced to rubble, in societies gone badly wrong, where violence has replaced the dignified, or at least for the most part dignified—OK, the occasionally dignified—debates of assemblies such as these. It is how we have come to solve our problems and to resolve our differences. It allows for peaceful coexistence to exist.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona):** The Chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke North.

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** Thank you, Speaker. Honourable ministers, Clerk DesRosiers, Deputy Clerk Deller, my fellow parliamentarians and, through you, Speaker, to the people of Ontario, it is with a great sense of honour, pride and solemn responsibility and duty that it's my privilege to second the motion to adopt the speech from the throne.

It's also a great honour to be part of a government, part of an agenda and part of the McGuinty vision that states as our platform a mandate for excellence in education, improving our health care, building stronger communities and laying the foundation for economic prosperity, a message of hope that has been widely appreciated by the great riding of Etobicoke North, the riding that I have the privilege to represent.

It's with a sense of history and heritage and knowledge of the weight of parliamentary democracy that I speak before you. For example, I quote from the address in reply to the throne speech that was made in 1903, 100 years ago, and I think this applies to our government still: "I feel assured that your legislative labours during the present session will be characterized by the same earnest care and thoughtful attention as have heretofore marked the work of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario." Sir,



Speaker, people of Ontario, that was tabled at 3:30 pm March 10, 1903.

1610

In order to highlight some of my remarks, I'd like to offer a personal vision and some road signs or guideposts under six different headings. I would just like to address some brief commentary. The first is as a matter of introduction; second, as a Liberal; third, as a physician; fourth, as a South Asian Canadian or a multicultural Canadian or a hyphenated Canadian; fifth, as a writer or media commentator; and sixth, as an MPP and parliamentary assistant.

I'd like, by way of introduction, to quote from the father of Western medicine—Hippocrates, that is—whose oath I swore in 1988 at Convocation Hall at the University of Toronto, not too far from where I speak today. He wrote in fourth-century BC Greece: "Life is short, and the art long; opportunity fugitive; experience deceptive, and judgment difficult." I think this very well highlights not only the dilemma that a physician faces but that, too, of the legislators.

I represent proudly here the 120,000 residents of Etobicoke North, and I'm reminded of some of my days spent in kindergarten when we were actually taught a lesson which I used to think was the Ontario provincial anthem, and it went something like this:

Give us a place to stand  
And a place to grow  
And call this land Ontario.

I wish that this would come back into vogue, but it seems to me that my particular riding of Etobicoke North is such a land. Bordered by Steeles and the Humber River, Dixon Road, the 401 and Highway 27, it remains to this day a vibrant and energetic place for both old and new Canadians to grow, to stand, to progress and to flourish, with the busy, busy thoroughfares of Albion, Islington, Kipling, Rexdale, Highway 27 and Dixon Road. I think the residents of the riding of Etobicoke North will especially benefit as we bring to law and bring to pass our ambitious agenda, which puts people first.

As a Liberal: Liberal values, I think, were very well codified in the throne speech, and I would like to invoke now the mantle of one of the great Canadians of this century, a nation-builder, and whether we offer him a mountain or a highway bearing his name, I think the mantle of Pierre Elliott Trudeau remains with us still, abides in and informs our judgments, our legacy and our vision.

I'd like to quote from one of the books he wrote, of the title *Towards a Just Society*. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister, wrote: "In my thinking, the value with the highest priority in the pursuit of a just society had become equality ... equality of opportunity."

It is with great pride, Speaker, that I bring to your attention and, through you to the people of Ontario, that it was the immigrants, many of whom came on his watch, who have now spawned their second and third generations, of which I number. That is one of the reasons why

his name is spoken of so fondly in many, many circles. As Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien mentioned at his farewell address here in Toronto most recently, « Nous célébrons la vision, la passion, l'esprit. Ça, c'est le libéralisme. »

In the present time, I am a Liberal for many reasons, not only for the heritage of Trudeau. I would like to share with you the encounter I had with the then MPP from Ottawa South in 1996, before he was the honourable Premier of this province, before he was even Leader of the Opposition, one Dalton McGuinty.

I happened to be sitting next to him at a multicultural dinner of the Multicultural Society of Pakistani Canadians, arranged by my friend and colleague and adviser, Mr Qamar Sadiq. As we spoke throughout the evening over a couple of hours and I learned of his vision for health care, education and fiscal responsibility, it became clear to me that he fully embodied the vision that is actually carved into the august wood of this very chamber: integrity, industry and intelligence.

Just as one example of that, Premier McGuinty has appointed every single one of the members of his caucus to powerful cabinet committees so we will have a true, honest and forthright say in the legislation that will affect the lives of Ontarians.

I'd also like to, with your permission, recall some encounters with the MPP from Scarborough-Rouge River, one Mr Alvin Curling, who was there for me on a personal basis to always lend a hand and wise counsel and advice and strategy. I recall the words of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr, who said there will come a time when people "will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character." I'm honoured to speak in front of the first black Speaker this Chamber has ever had.

I'd also like to recall for a moment some of the events and encounters associated with the MPP for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, one Mr George Smitherman. Following the terrible events of September 11, 2001, many multicultural Canadians, especially those of Middle Eastern, Asian and Muslim background, recalled, once upon a time, a dark phase of Canadian history when Japanese Canadians were actually interned, imprisoned in a sense, following the episodes of World War II. We felt there might be some new form of internment, perhaps a virtual internment—a new form of internment of the mind.

I say that, not as mere sophistry or academics, because there were others in this House who sought to exploit that time of vulnerability of that community, who wanted to invoke the old adages of divide and rule, divide and conquer, strategic blame, narrow casting, wedge politics and wedge issues. That is certainly not the mandate of this government, but to show tolerance and respect for others and liberal values.

I would like to say, with regard to the MPP from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, that his honourable conduct then preceded by several years the title of "honourable" that he now bears. Immediately after the events of September 11, there was a press conference at one of the



largest mosques here in Toronto. I would like to say that the very first member of this Legislature who came to that event to reassure that particular group, that particular population, of the values of tolerance and respect was in fact Mr George Smitherman, the MPP for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

As a physician, I ask rhetorically, what does a physician actually do, by training and by nature? Well, we engage in both a physical as well as an emotional examination, internal and external, and we try to bring to bear the collective wisdom of the ages. We seek out problems, suffering, the bodily injustices and wounds of the flesh as well as the soul. I say to you, isn't the role of the Legislature the same? Isn't the Legislature's goal, not unlike the goal of physicians, to bring real and positive change to the body politic, the very catchwords of our government?

That's why I'm especially proud, as a physician, to be part of a government that has brought forth the commitment to medicare act that will outlaw the privatization or profitization of health care. As we have said, the McGuinty government will pass a commitment to a medicare act enshrining the universal nature of our health care system in law, and making two-tier, pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care illegal in this province.

As a doctor for the past 14 years practising family medicine, dealing with major illnesses and terminal conditions, and with people who are recovering from both external or self-abuse, I know that illness can be a time of vulnerability and challenge. That is the very time when our people, our patients, Ontarians and Canadians broadly, should not have to worry about the financial ramifications. That is why I am proud to be part of a government that will enshrine into law and extend the principles of the Canada Health Act—comprehensiveness, accessibility, universality, publicly funded, publicly administered—and now add the quality of accountability. I'm proud to be part of a government that will preserve, protect and defend these principles.

As well, as a physician, I think it's very important that we ensure it will be an effort of health care and not wealth care, where the citizens of Ontario will be asked only for their health card and not for their credit card. I would like to share for a moment some quick observations from the United States of America. In the same way that we here in Canada have RESPs for education and RRSPs for retirement, I hope the time will not come, as it exists today in the United States, where we will have RMSPs, medical savings plans, because as you rightly know, certain operations—for example, cardiac bypass surgery and its after-care—can actually bankrupt families. That is particularly one of the reasons why 40% of the citizenry of the United States has no health care coverage at all.

1620

En matière de soins de santé, ce gouvernement partage le point de vue de la majorité des Ontariennes et Ontariens. Dans cette province, il n'y a pas de place pour un système permettant à ceux qui ont de l'argent de se

procurer des soins de santé meilleurs ou plus rapides. Au cours de cette session, nous allons mettre en œuvre notre Loi sur l'engagement d'assurer l'avenir de l'assurance-santé, en consacrant le principe de l'universalité dans la loi et en rendant illégaux les soins de santé à deux tarifs en Ontario.

Nous entamerons aussi le processus de réforme des soins de première ligne en créant des équipes de santé familiale dans toute la province. Ces équipes seront composées de professionnels de la santé qui veilleront à ce que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens reçoivent les soins les meilleurs et les plus efficaces possibles. C'est bon pour eux, et c'est bon pour le système.

I would now like to share with you for a moment some comments under the heading of a South Asian-Canadian or a multicultural Canadian or, for want of another title, a hyphenated Canadian. I am proud to be part of a country and a province and a city that values and honours and celebrates its diversity. I think never before has this been more true of this province and this country than in this Legislature, with now, for the first time, eight visible minorities, and in particular four South Asians.

I'd like to share, in total, an article that I had the privilege of publishing in the Toronto Star in 1997 during the 50th anniversary of nationhood of the Indian sub-continent and that for me broadly summarizes the mind-scape, the intellect and the sentiments of multicultural Canadians from my particular vantage point. Though when it appeared in the Toronto Star it was actually titled "South Asian Canadians Savour Best of Both Worlds," I think of it now as a rhapsody on multiculturalism.

"This August 14th and August 15th mark 54 years of nationhood for Pakistan and India. Globally, celebrations are being orchestrated by embassies, professional groups, learned societies and community associations. Locally, we hyphenated folk, the South Asian-Canadians, reflect and give thanks, overeat and reminisce.

"First, to reaffirm our Canadian content. Though our origins are from the subcontinent, our psyches and allegiances are Canadian. The ties now bind. Though it took a generation, we have learned to enjoy the snow, not just endure it. We now are alumni of all educational institutions, viscerally attached to the Blue Jays and Raptors. We have learned how to sing national anthems in various languages—English, French and many eastern dialects. Put us in an international gathering, and instantly we are ambassadors for Canada.

"Alongside this love for Canada, however, there remains in us a bond to South Asia. The ideal of the sub-continent, its soaring spirit, masala cuisine, Arabesque architecture, draping fashions ... love triangle movies, super-extended families, and respect-laden values. Every family here shed blood for those countries, and it is a memory not easily erased. Emotions still pull, and the senses still gravitate.

"So we're often of two minds. And like the dollar-rupee exchange rate, the proportion one way or the other is always in flux.



"Categorizations are dangerous, but here goes: The Canadian influence is secular, commercial, experimental and bracing. The South Asian wave is spiritual, traditional, poetic and tropical. The combination, like the mixing of the Gulf Stream and the Atlantic Ocean, creates something new and exhilarating. This synergy, this ability to register from a Can-Asian perspective, is at once a source of great richness and recurrent struggle. Seeing life through such a prism makes us appreciate afresh and re-evaluate all that we hold dear.

"What is valued most by the expatriate community here is that Canada is a place for education, new beginnings and the development of talents. All this in a mutually respectful society that honours its multicultural mosaic.

"Here since the 1960s, our first generation came to Canada for those now echoing words—'graduate degrees, higher studies.' It can perhaps be revealed now that their intention was to graduate, lengthen their name by a few letters and return home.

"The unexpected happened. Slowly, Canada became home. The education worked. Since children are everything for South Asians, the first generation stayed to give the next one even broader horizons. The community realized that being educated was not just a matter of knowing a few ministry-approved facts. Canada was a way of life, the opportunity to labour in freedom, guarding your religion as you wished, always enticed by a never-ending stream of creature comforts.

"The heavy push on education has had worthy after-effects. It turns out, I guess inevitably, that the parents were right. Cultivation of the mind and contributing to society have been the collective enterprise.

"That's why South Asian-Canadians contribute to the old countries, visit often, lead trade delegations and attend festivals with a vengeance. We transfer technology, participate politically and share medical advances. Last, we pray for progress and peace.

"Though we have learned to play hockey on ice and not on a field, the South Asian element lingers. We follow the subcontinent's geopolitics and fortunes. We await the fateful" notifications "announcing the demise of aged relatives left long ago. We hope that with our Canadian vantage, we can contribute to the betterment of those graceful post-colonial lands. They say Canada is a resource-rich country. We think of ourselves as a resource. We are the brains that, once drained, reached here.

"It is certainly getting easier to reach out to South Asia, though great challenges remain. The subcontinent has tumbled fast forward into the information age. This is now acting as a creative destruction. The countries are learning what it means to be a Web-linked, menu-driven cultures.

"I was surveying the scenery from atop my grandfather's house in Karachi," Pakistan, "recently. I counted some 20 satellite dishes within easy view. Strangely, my grandfather's home had two dishes pointing in opposite directions. Asking why, I was given the self-evident

answer: 'Son, one's for the east, one's for the west. We want the best of both worlds.'" We too.

For myself, that summarizes the duel levels of perception and experience and I feel it's a privilege and blessing to be a part of a province, a society, a party, and now a government that honours and values its multicultural heritage, in particular as part of our mandate a government that is striking a new immigration and labour-market agreement with the federal government and is going to allow qualified and internationally trained tradespeople and professionals to work here in their chosen field, here in their chosen province.

Some comments to the people of Ontario as a physician-writer and a participant in medical media, having published in my own local Etobicoke Guardian and also as a former medical contributor to the Globe and Mail:

It was Joseph Stalin—not a friend of democracy—who thought that writers were "the engineers of human souls." That was his phrase. He thought that the writer's mandate was to awaken insight and occasionally propagandize. I think the press here at times furthers the government's agenda but very often at times challenges the government's agenda. I think that's great, because we in the government here feel that we will be honest with Ontarians, giving them the straight goods on the challenges that we all face; again, embodying the visions of integrity, industry and intelligence.

Part of the pleasure of being a broadcaster or a writer or a person engaged with the media is dealing with people with an audience, a readership, a listenership that is alert and informed. That's why I'm proud to be part of a government that will increase the learning in the public education sector to age 18 and will reduce class sizes and freeze tuition fees at universities and colleges, because we know that's the only way we'll be able to compete in a knowledge-based economy, and best as able we are to guarantee prosperity and contentment for the future. It's together with Ontarians as we write a new chapter that we will be the authors of our own destiny.

I speak now, Speaker, under one of the final headings as an MPP and parliamentary assistant. I'd like to once again bring to your attention and, through you, to the people of Ontario some of the great riches found in the riding of Etobicoke North, be it residential or in the service industry or the commercial enterprises. In particular, as an example, we have in my riding alone Etobicoke General Hospital, Humber College and Woodbine Racetrack and slots. So you can quite easily engage in Etobicoke North in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

It's a great place for both old and new Canadians, vintage and recent Canadians. I'm reminded that even during this most recent election campaign in September-October I had the privilege of campaigning in my own riding in nine languages, including English, French, Urdu, Punjabi, Italian, Arabic, Spanish and Somali. It's the message we brought forth, then as the Liberal Party and now as the government, and people responded to the message, imaginations were captured.

I'd like now to recognize for a moment some of the visionaries who shared with me their hopes and dreams and struggles in Etobicoke North: people like Jack and Pauline Helferty, people like Kevin and Lisa Malcolm, and Gary Singh, and Dr Naseem Mahdi, and Dil Mohamed and the Gilani Group, and Tony Vlassopoulos, and Omar Farook, and Osman Ali, and Sukdev Randhawa, and Charles Sachdev, and Jagdish Grewal and Manjinder Singh, people who embody the best that is Ontarian, the best that is Canadian.

I would also like to salute for a moment some of my counterparts in other levels of government, the federal member of Parliament, the MP for the area, Mr Roy Cullen, as well as the most recently re-elected councillor Suzan Hall.

It's a special privilege to be part of a government, part of the McGuinty vision, a Premier who is bringing to bear many of the instruments of government. That's why I'm privileged to be the parliamentary assistant to the now being created Ministry of Children's Services, an issue that is of prime importance to this government as well as to the Premier, and I may also mention, to the incoming new Prime Minister, Mr Paul Martin. I'm privileged to serve under the very capable and ever enthusiastic and energetic Minister for Children's Services, the Honourable Marie Bountrogianni.

Honourable Ministers, fellow parliamentarians, and through you, Speaker, to the people of Ontario, I've had an opportunity to rhapsodize on some of the philosophy, the underpinning, the positioning, the mindset I've had and have developed over several years as a Liberal, as a physician, as a South Asian-Canadian, as a writer, as someone engaged with the media, as well as an MPP and a parliamentary assistant. Once again, it's with a sense of history and duty and great solemn responsibility that I beg leave to conclude my remarks for an address in reply to the speech from the throne.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Stoney Creek and the member from Etobicoke North for some very interesting and thoughtful words on the speech from the throne. With that, I'd like to move the adjournment of the debate today.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I move adjournment of the House.

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** Whoa. What are you doing? Sit down, please. We've got our signals crossed here. It can roll off the tongue and I understand that, Speaker.

I wanted to inform the House of the House schedule for next week, but I'd also like to add my congratulations to the members from Stoney Creek and Etobicoke North on very fine maiden speeches.

As follows, on Monday, December 15, in the afternoon we'll have an address from the leader of the official opposition in response to His Honour's speech from the throne; in the evening, resuming the throne speech debate, the leader of the third party, and then the general rotation of speakers.

Tuesday afternoon: third reading of Bill 2, the tax bill; Tuesday evening is to be arranged.

Wednesday afternoon: third reading debate, day two of Bill 2, the tax bill; the evening is to be arranged.

Thursday afternoon and evening also are to be arranged.

With that, I would like to move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until 6:45 o'clock this evening.

*The House adjourned at 1634.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*



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of Ontario**

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
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Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Thursday 11 December 2003**

**Jeudi 11 décembre 2003**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier  
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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 December 2003

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTRICITY PRICING), 2003

### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTABLISSEMENT DU COÛT DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

Mr Duncan moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario à l'égard de l'établissement du coût de l'électricité.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I welcome the opportunity, the first time in a very long time, that this assembly has been able to have third reading debate on a bill that has actually been to committee. So this, while not innovative, has certainly not been done a lot in the last eight years.

Our view with respect to this bill is that it provides realistic electricity pricing. We believe it's the right and responsible thing to do. With the proposed legislation, our government is taking, as I said, a responsible approach to electricity pricing that better reflects the true cost of electricity.

The previous government's price cap, price freeze, has contributed to the \$5.6-billion deficit that we inherited from the previous government and has the cost the taxpayers in its first year approximately \$800 million.

That price freeze was simply unrealistic. Ultimately, Ontario taxpayers are paying the price for this bad decision. It would be irresponsible, in our view, for the province and the taxpayers of our province to continue to subsidize electricity consumption because the subsidy jeopardizes our ability to invest in health care and education.

The days of using energy as a political football are over. We owe it to the people of Ontario to ensure our government lives within its means and puts the public interest first.

The NDP have been all over the board on this issue. They're voting against this. We brought forward the

quotes from Mr Hampton in his book and what he said before the election, what he said during the election. We really don't know what they stand for. They try to be, as in most cases, all things to all people. First they didn't want the cap; they voted against the cap, criticized us. Now they're voting against taking the cap off. It's called flip and flop, and that's where they've been, all over the board.

Our plan takes the politics and politicians out of electricity pricing, and we give that responsibility ultimately to an independent regulator, the Ontario Energy Board. The OEB has been directed to assume this responsibility as soon as possible, and no later than May 2005.

Through this plan, we are delivering on our commitment toward fiscal responsibility and fair and responsible government for the people of Ontario.

I'd like to take a few moments to address certain aspects of the bill. First, the consumer protection aspect of the bill and what we believe to be a fair and reasonable solution to the situation that has existed until now.

Consumer protection is the hallmark of our policy. The proposed legislation ensures that Ontario electricity consumers have fair, predictable and stable rates that better reflect the true cost of this important commodity. The plan we've outlined in this bill would protect residential and low-volume consumers from the volatile price spikes we saw in the summer and fall of 2002, when the Tories were in power.

## 1850

Remember, the Tories created a situation that threw every consumer in Ontario on to the so-called spot market. This price cap—which was derided by many of their own supporters—of the previous government's energy policy basically began to undo their policy: failure of their policy. By taking this step tonight, we'll be able to create a new policy around energy that will help ensure long-term viability with stable and affordable prices.

As I indicated a few moments ago, the Ontario Energy Board will be the price regulator and will develop a clear and transparent way of setting prices as soon as possible, and no later than May 1, 2005. Electricity prices would be regulated on the basis of what is in the public interest. Even after the removal of the cap, electricity prices in Ontario are expected to be competitive with most nearby jurisdictions, and in fact will remain below that of New York, Illinois, Massachusetts and Michigan.

We are committed through this two-tiered plan to treat consumers fairly and in what we believe to be the public



interest. If the interim price turns out to be higher than the true cost, all eligible consumers will receive a credit on their bill for the difference once the OEB implements their pricing mechanism.

Another part of the bill that we are pleased about and believe is significant that I want to spend a moment talking about is energy conservation. The government's plan would include a strong incentive to conserve energy, which is critical to ensure the sustainability of our supply.

Conservation also makes good environmental sense because it will reduce our reliance on coal-fired generators, which will help us meet our commitment to phase out coal-fired generation by 2007.

The fact that consumers have been shielded from the true cost of electricity has encouraged consumption instead of encouraging conservation. The current price cap would be removed in favour of a pricing structure that will send a clear and powerful conservation message to Ontarians.

Starting April 1, 2004, the first 750 kilowatt hours consumed in any month would be priced at 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour. Consumption above that level would be priced at a higher rate of 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour. A typical suburban home in Ontario consumes approximately 1,000 kilowatt hours per month. Conservation measures could help reduce that consumption level.

Our goal through all of this has been that with relatively modest changes in their consumption patterns, average consumers will be able to absorb at least a substantial portion of the increase that will be associated with removing the price cap. Since the proposed plan would not take effect until April 1, 2004, consumers would have a chance to review their energy use, take conservation measures and, as a result, as I indicated a moment ago, limit the impact of the price change on their bill.

We will be reinforcing our message about conservation in many ways. For example, the government will be taking action to improve its own conservation performance. In the coming weeks, the Chair of Management Board will be announcing a new plan to make a noticeable reduction in the government's overall energy consumption. The Minister of Finance recently announced that the current provincial sales tax rebate for energy-efficient appliances would be extended in order to encourage and support energy efficiency and conservation.

We will also expand efforts to educate consumers about steps they can take to conserve electricity and use other forms of energy, with information designed for households and businesses. To ensure our energy future, the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Education will work together to build conservation awareness into the curriculum for our young people in school.

As of March 1, 2005, local distribution companies would be allowed to achieve their full commercial return, but only on the condition that they reinvest the equivalent of one year's worth of these additional monies in conservation and demand management programs. This

represents an investment in new conservation initiatives of approximately \$225 million, one of the largest investments in conservation of its kind in Ontario's history.

As citizens of this province, we all have to take responsibility to conserve energy and protect our environment. This bill is one in what will be many positive steps toward a responsible approach to electricity pricing. Our government realizes that difficult decisions need to be made in order to govern responsibly. Not only will the legislation better reflect the true cost of electricity, it will help us meet environmental goals.

On November 27, Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller released a report in which he applauded the McGuinty government's commitment to phase out coal-fired plants that have a negative impact on our environment. Simply put, without this policy as its predecessor we would not be able to achieve it, but we're confident we will achieve our goal.

This new interim measure will create an investment climate that will better encourage new electricity supply. As new supply comes on-line, we will become less dependent on the dirty coal-fired plants.

The price cap of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour that was imposed by the previous government was not only irresponsible, it was contributing in a significant way to our inability to create new supply in our province. Our government's plan promotes a safe, reliable and sustainable supply of energy for the future, something that is absolutely essential for further investment in our economy, for the economic development of this province.

It should be noted that the previous government created no new supply of energy in their years in office. Because of the failure to keep Pickering properly maintained, the Tories were forced to take—

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** How can the energy minister make that statement?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Which ones? What did you create?

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the Minister of Energy should know full well that the province did create new energy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona):** What's the point of order?

**Mr O'Toole:** I think he should correct the record. He's the Minister of Energy. He should know.

**The Acting Speaker:** That's not a point of order. Minister.

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Mr Speaker, let me talk for a moment about Pickering, if the government wants to speak about its record on electricity. Because of the failure to keep Pickering properly maintained, the Tories were forced to take 4,700 megawatts of nuclear power off-line in 1997. These problems are expected to cost us \$3 billion and have put Pickering A years behind schedule. Supply shortages have been a result of this.

Our plan is a major step forward on the energy file, something the previous government was afraid to do, something the previous government couldn't do. As we find out more and more about what went on in Pickering,

the case becomes more compelling that this previous government was a failure when it came to economic and energy policy. This bill tonight that we are finishing debate on at third reading will begin to undo the mess created by the Harris-Eves government.

We are sending a clear signal with this bill that Ontario intends to deal with electricity issues in a practical, sensible and transparent way.

Yesterday, I announced and introduced legislation that provides freedom of information on OPG and Hydro One, two major provincial assets. The previous government refused to do that for five years, since 1998, at the creation of those companies. This will shed light. I know information will be coming forward, and when this information is available it will be of great interest, not only to ratepayers but to taxpayers and to those of us who have debated energy policy over the last few years.

Finally, this plan reaffirms our commitment to modernize our electricity system by attracting new supply, encouraging conservation and delivering cleaner energy to the people of Ontario.

We believe this step, while it is a difficult step, is essential for us to move forward in the creation of energy and in ensuring that we have an adequate supply of energy well into the future.

I conclude by saying that we had a failed policy by the NDP. The NDP raised hydro rates when they were in office; 40%, hydro rates went up under the NDP, a complete failure of an administration. They talk now about closing down nuclear power plants. When they were in office, they kept them going.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Member from Kenora-Rainy River, I'm trying to listen to the debate here.

1900

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I had a chance to read Mr Hampton's book. In fact, he even autographed my copy. I'm grateful for that. It's unfortunate that more people haven't read the parts about the need for private sector participation in the creation of electricity in Ontario, most unfortunate.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I did buy it. I got it in the bargain bin and I've enjoyed reading it—great reading. I can't wait for the sequel, where they might tell what their policy on energy pricing really is. But for anybody who's interested in what Mr Hampton has to say about private energy—

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There will be no need for a sequel. The Liberal energy policy is the same as the Conservative energy policy.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I'm referring to the sequel to Public Power, by Howard Hampton.

**The Acting Speaker:** Minister of Energy, perhaps you can just speak without the book.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I apologize. I'm just trying to help sales out.

Page 18 of the book tells how Mr Hampton believes that private energy generation is important to our future. I'd urge all Ontarians to buy the book and read that page, to have a look at what he's had to say about these things and how it differs from what he campaigns on.

In conclusion, it's important for this province to move forward, to get on with the idea of creating a reliable supply of power. This bill tonight is a first tentative step in that process. We look forward to finishing this debate and hearing what my colleagues have to say. But at the end of this term we will have begun to correct the problems created by the previous government, and by the NDP government in the five years before them.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I just want to thank the Minister of Energy for showing Mr Hampton's book. I thought it was great.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** What's the name of the book again?

**Mr Bisson:** What's the name of the book? Give me the book.

Anyway, I just want to make a couple of points. I thought it was rather interesting—thank you very much. Here comes the book.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would have thought the member for Timmins-James Bay would have read the book.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Timmins-James Bay.

**Mr Bisson:** I just want to say a couple of things to it. It was interesting to listen to the Minister of Energy speak, because if one closed their eyes in this Legislature and just forgot the voice, one would think, "Who is speaking? None other than Mr Stockwell himself." There is no difference in the energy policy at this point between what the former Conservative government was doing and what the current Liberal government wants to do. That's the first point.

The second point: I just think it's rather interesting that every time they get up and speak, they're flashing this book. It is really good reading. It's called Public Power. I just want to read what's on page 18, because what he was referring to says, "I am not ideologically opposed to private power any more than I am opposed to private restaurants, clothing stores or car dealerships. My opposition to private power, especially if deregulated, is experience-based. Ontario's own unfortunate experience only adds to the body of evidence against deregulation and privatization." So it would be interesting to read that whole section to see what it says.

The point to this, I just want to say to the minister in regard to his opening comments, is that we've seen where this experiment has brought us before. I will say today in this Legislature, on December 11, that you can call it anything you want, but at the end of the day what you're trying to do is open the market and deregulate. That will end in disaster the same way that it did for the Conservatives.



**Mr O'Toole:** I did listen with a great deal of interest to the member from Windsor-St Clair, who is the Minister of Energy. I'd just like to put down on the record that I do respect the Liberal position because, as has been said by the NDP, it's not much different from ours. In fact, the only thing that's different is that they've actually broken the formula. In fact, if I look across at the opposition side, I see members on the other side that I have a lot of respect for. I think of the member for York Centre, the solicitor general for the province, who was on the first committee which dealt with what was called IIPA, the independent integrity operation—NAOP, the nuclear asset optimization. Monte was the Vice-Chair of that committee and served along with Sean Conway. These were very knowledgeable contributors to the long-standing debate and discussion on the very important policy of public power.

A lot of things will be said. I'm certainly staying here tonight until midnight if at all possible. I'll speak for most of that time. But what I am looking forward to is, the member for Burlington, our energy critic, has looked deliberately at this file. He has found a series of frailties—some would say obfuscation, if I may use that word—obfuscating some of the facts. The transition fund that was set up was a four-year fund. And unless the members on the other side, the newer members especially—especially those with no understanding—would know that the four-year plan has been interrupted—and it's a serious frailty in that the opposition, the government now, then opposition, voted for this. They knew at the time, with Sean Conway, and Monte Kwinter, who's now at the cabinet table—Sean certainly would have been the energy minister. In fact, it's my understanding he may even be a board member. He should be a board member of the new IMO or, I would say, Hydro One or OPG. I would support it, I say to the minister directly. But I'm waiting for the member for Burlington, because he has much to add and many questions that remain unanswered, and the Minister of Energy hasn't told the people the facts.

**Mr Hampton:** I'm pleased to have these two minutes. I just want to compliment the energy minister on his careful recitation of Chris Stockwell's speech. I can remember being in this Legislature—in fact, I can say that he has obviously read Norm Sterling as Minister of Energy, he has obviously read Jim Wilson as Minister of Energy, he's obviously read Chris Stockwell as Minister of Energy, and John Baird as Minister of Energy. He has succeeded, over the last couple of weeks, in replaying the very speeches they gave.

Let me give you one example. The minister says that by doing what he has done, increasing the retail price of electricity, he's going to attract new supply. Well, that's what Chris Stockwell said; that's what John Baird said; that's what Norm Sterling said. That's what Jim Wilson said over and over and over again. And what happened is that, yes, the price went up, but the Brascans and the Sithe Energies and the Enrons said, "It's got to go higher."

I'd just say to the minister, very soon those same companies will be coming back to you, and they'll be saying to you, "Yeah, well, getting up to 5.5 is good, but we need to see it up to 6 and 6.5." They are going to be constantly at your door, saying, "Get it up there higher." I urge you to talk to Mr Baird and talk to Mr Stockwell and talk to Mr Wilson, because that was their embarrassing experience, that the very same private energy companies that said, "Oh, yes, we'll do the supply," were constantly lobbying for a higher price.

But I will say one thing. I think that, following your speech added on to their speeches, there's definite potential for wind energy in the province.

**Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge):** Mr Speaker—

**Mr O'Toole:** Tell us all about Pickering, Wayne.

**Mr Arthurs:** I could talk about Pickering, but we're going to talk about the—

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge. Just wait until I recognize you.

**Mr Arthurs:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just a few things: In the summer of 2002, we saw high demand, we saw price spiking, we saw a lack of local supply. We didn't have the nukes operating in a substantive way. During the course of that summer and into the early fall, the government of the day reacted, or overreacted, in freezing the rates. Those frozen rates haven't generated any particular interest in the consumer in modifying their behaviour whatsoever at this point in time. Clearly the sustainability of this situation can't go on. We have \$800 million a year in debt. The members opposite will suggest that it's not there, that it's some other figure. The reality is, that's what it is. Over four years—they were projecting a zero number in four years—\$800 million, that's \$3.2 billion in additional debt at that time, and still nothing would happen with consumers to encourage them in any way to modify their behaviour in a substantive way during that period of time. As a matter of fact, if in effect the rate freeze stayed on for an extended period beyond next April, when it came off the situation wouldn't be better; the situation would be substantively worse.

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We've managed to shield the debt. We've shielded the real cost. It's a consumption-driven environment that we're in rather than a conservation-driven environment. We still don't get it about leaving lights on all over the place—our kids don't get it. We don't still get it about running three and four fridges. We still don't get it about having the air conditioning on at lower rates for hours on end, when we're gone. Even the blackout showed that.

There's a need to make these adjustments now to put a sense of reality into what's happening in energy in this province and in the country—in the world, for that matter—and drive consumers to an agenda where they have to conserve and begin using energy in a far more responsible fashion.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response by the Minister of Energy.



**Hon Mr Duncan:** I'm pleased to respond to the members who responded to my speech. First of all, to my colleague Mr O'Toole from Durham—

**Mr O'Toole:** Oshawa.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** —Oshawa, Durham, I'm sorry—he didn't address my speech. He wants us to listen to Mr Jackson, which is fine. I say to him that your government's policy failed. It added \$800 million to the provincial deficit; it did nothing for conservation; it did nothing but set back your own efforts on creating supply.

Mr Hampton, the member for Kenora-Rainy River, waxed on about how I was continuing the policy of the previous Tory government. In fact, this bill is undoing that government's policy, and this is a first step.

The second step we took was applying FOI—that is freedom of information—to OPG and Hydro One. We're also going to have disclosure of salaries over \$100,000. Those, admittedly, are small steps. We have replaced the senior executives at OPG. We have put in an interim board, chaired by Mr Jake Epp.

Again, those are just the first steps at what is essentially a process to undo the policies of the previous government. I would remind Mr Hampton that in his regulated market, when he was a member of the government of Ontario, prices for electricity went up 40% before they put a cap on. So I need no lessons from Mr Hampton about the price of electricity and what this bill, and what we, will do to the price of electricity. One thing I'm confident of is that prices will not, as a result of this bill, go up 40%, the way they did in Mr Hampton's utopia of a regulated market.

To my colleague from Pickering, I appreciate his words, because he focused on conservation. In 1993, the chair of then-Ontario Hydro suspended all demand management programs at Hydro—that is, conservation initiatives—right after the price had gone up 40%, of course. I guess they felt that that was adequate conservation incentive, but that's not a conservation policy at all, as Mr Hampton pointed out in earlier debates in this House on this bill. We have provided for \$225 million toward conservation that will kick in in the next two years.

This bill is a responsible approach that changes the direction of energy policy in this province and will help improve this province's economic viability in future.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Jackson:** I'm pleased to be able to comment this evening on behalf of the official opposition with respect to Bill 4. At the outset, I wanted to set the context for this incredible piece of legislation that nobody in Ontario anticipated—not one single citizen—maybe with the exception of the soon-to-be Premier, Dalton McGuinty. Clearly he must have known he was going to break this promise when he was promising Ontarians before October 2 that he'd leave the cap in place, that he wouldn't lift that cap, because, as he said on many occasions, people needed protection, consumers needed protection, so he would leave the cap in place until 2006.

Canadians have come to appreciate some of the largest political lies in Canadian history. We know the GST is one.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

**The Acting Speaker:** Member, I think you should withdraw that.

**Mr Jackson:** I will withdraw. I should have been rather more specific with respect to federal Liberal—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Just one moment. If you're going to raise a point of order, please be in your seat; it's for the new members.

**Mr Jackson:** I am going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Durham, for the record. Let's see, where was I? I was talking about some of the most famous federal Liberal fibs in Canadian history. The fib about the GST: "We're not going to implement a GST." The other fib about free trade; the western energy agreement: These are classic cases in Canadian history.

**Mr Delaney:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: "Fib," "fibber" and all derivatives of them would appear to be in violation of four clauses of the rules of debate in the standing orders.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member, I think you indirectly have said that.

**Mr Delaney:** I quote from two universally—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Member, I think you should withdraw that also.

**Mr Jackson:** I will withdraw it, but this House has already ruled on the fact that it's not naming a specific member of this House or of this Parliament. In fact, the notion of a fib has already been put on the record at least five times since this Parliament has come back. It hasn't been attributed. I'm certainly not attributing—

**The Acting Speaker:** For the record, let's not speak that way. We can just continue.

**Mr Jackson:** Well, a broken promise, a breach of trust, a breach of faith with the voters—the point I'm trying to make here is that everyone in this province was shocked and dismayed to learn that this government, with a majority, wasn't even waiting a year, not a couple of months, not a couple of weeks but a matter of days before it broke one of its most significant promises. We relied on the honesty and the integrity and the word of a future Premier.

I have a quote here. I referenced it earlier in the House today. It's Dalton McGuinty on the Bill Carroll Show on CFRB on November 13, 2002, speaking about the need for the existence of a rate cap.

Question: "If you're elected to the Premier's office tomorrow, Mr McGuinty, what do you do to fix the hydro situation as it is today?"

McGuinty: "First of all, we have to maintain rate relief for consumers. I have had the terrible responsibility to raise horror stories in the Legislature, people who have been put ... in a desperate position because they simply can't afford to pay their hydro. So we've got to maintain rate relief for our ratepayers."



Breaking faith, breaking their word, breaking their promise to 1.3 million ratepayers, individuals in this province who pay their hydro every month.

We had to listen to the reason that they had to break this promise. The reason they say they had to break this promise and break their word with the people of Ontario was that it was an absolute shock to them that the rate subsidy produced by the cap was a shocking \$800 million. Now, I want to correct the record, and the minister will be able to do that if he wishes. He said \$800 million in its first year, and that is not correct, sir. Your own staff supplied me with information yesterday that confirmed that the rate was \$655 million in its first year, and in its second year to date it is \$100 million. That is information supplied to a legislative committee yesterday, and the Chair of that committee is present in the House today.

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But this was a manufactured deficit. This is a manufactured number by the highly paid, private sector consultant Erik Peters. He's not a public servant any longer. He is not unlike the many consultants that the Liberals said they would get rid of because they are former civil servants but now they're in the private sector, getting rates much higher than when we compensated them as civil servants.

That manufactured deficit implied that taxpayers were going to have to subsidize hydro rates in each and every one of the next few years leading up to when the cap comes off in 2006, to the tune of about \$800 million. This is a fallacy. To suggest otherwise would be misleading, because the facts are very clear: The year-to-date expenditure for this fiscal year, for the cap at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour, is about \$100 million.

As I said earlier in the House today, this government this week increased taxes in the province of Ontario by \$800 million. They clawed back from senior citizens about \$450 million, yet they would begrudge \$100 million to provide the stability, predictability, to hydro rates until the year 2006, when we can have in place, as a province, a proper management plan, a plan that deals with meaningful conservation; a plan that empowers consumers so that they have the technical tools in order to reduce their consumption. Time-of-use metering—it's a fallacy for consumers to think that by using electricity at midnight they're somehow saving themselves money. They're not; it's a blended rate. They still pay the higher rate regardless of what time of day they use electricity in their home. Until we provide them with this technology, until we empower consumers with that, they cannot be the instruments of their own public policy objective of them being able to reduce their energy consumption. So they are powerless. The only power they have is the right to pay higher rates for energy, which, as I've indicated earlier, are somewhat unnecessary given that the mitigation plan brought in by our government is now costing taxpayers about \$100 million a year. This is sustainable in a budget of over \$70 billion to pay for all the services in the province of Ontario.

So we on this side of the House reject completely that—this is nothing less than a manufactured deficit based on fearmongering and an erroneous assumption that we cannot sustain \$100-million rate protection for energy consumers in this province.

The minister says that the purpose of this bill is to lift the cap and move energy prices closer to market value, and that consumers will be protected because it'll be more predictable. I can tell you, it's a lot more predictable on your budget today in Ontario if you're paying 4.3 cents than it is going to be, paying 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour.

But you see, this bill goes further than that, even though the minister doesn't speak to that. It isn't just about that half of a consumer's energy bill that deals with the price of energy; it deals with the other half of a consumer's energy bill. Generally speaking, half of your hydro bill is for the energy you consume. The other half is for about nine different items, including debt service, paying for asset management, paying for the profit for the local distribution company—a whole series of charges. It's on that half of the bill that this legislation will increase costs to consumers in this province over the next four years, in excess of \$1 billion. That's over and above the increased rate to 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour.

By March 1, 2004—and make no mistake; this is only two and a half months away—every local distribution company in this province will be able to begin the charging of consumers, over a prescribed period of time, \$750 million for previously approved Ontario Energy Board expenses.

Now, our legislation, from the Conservative government, froze those until 2006. The Liberals are saying, "Do you know what? You need your profit. You need to be able to jack up your rates. You need to be able to get compensated for some of your expenditures." But that's not all. This bill says that by March 1, 2005, we are going to guarantee that all these local distribution companies receive their fair rate of return on investment, which is almost 10%. This is incremental revenue. This is repeating itself every year. This isn't just a one-time expenditure. That's a quarter of a billion dollars and accounts for three cents per kilowatt hour. So rather than the increase of some 30% that the rate is going up, from 4.3 up to 5.5, you're adding another five cents to cover off this billion dollars of increased expenditures that will appear on people's hydro bills.

The minister made reference to and seemed quite proud of the fact that this bill had public hearings. I guess you can say having three hours and six people making the long trip to Queen's Park to speak to a committee of the Legislature constituted a public hearing. However, what concerned me is not the fact that there were so few people and so little time; it's that the recommendations being made by the people who saw fit to come and speak to us as legislators were not being followed and were not even being listened to. The minister has put on the public record that he has instructed his MPPs on the standing committee on justice and social policy, charged with the



responsibility of dealing with Bill 4, the energy bill, not to bring forward any amendments.

I felt compelled to bring forward at least a few of these amendments which came out of the public consultation process. In other words, if you're going to have public consultation, it must be because you feel there is some way of improving this bill. Now, I want every Liberal member in the House tonight to ask yourself, even if you didn't know anything about energy, what area you would look to in a bill to determine if it could be strengthened. I submit to you that that is probably the area the minister himself says this bill purports to strengthen, and that is consumer protection.

If that is so, why then did the Liberal members of the committee specifically vote down amendments that would protect consumers in this province? I'll give you an example. This one really upset me, because it's a principle of fairness. Many members of this House have constituents who live in apartment buildings. Under the government's plan, there is a break, a discount, at 4.7 cents up to 750 kilowatt hours of consumption in a given month period. If you live in a 100-unit apartment building, then obviously that building is going to be consuming energy totally at the higher rate. So we proposed, with an amendment, that if there are 100 units, you should divide that energy bill by 100 and give every single tenant in that building the discounted rate before the higher threshold of 5.5 cents kicks in. This would save consumers costs that were unnecessarily borne, it would be fair, it would be reasonable and it would be a decent way to proceed. But no, the government rejected that. They completely rejected it. This has applications for persons in retirement homes, for persons in nursing homes; it has applications for a whole series of people in society who don't have the benefit of individual metering but who have to pay for their hydro.

There are other examples. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture presented in a very informed and precise way. In fact, Ontario farmers stand to have to pay increases of upwards of \$50 million as a result of this rate increase. They are using, my colleague from Durham tells me, as little as 4% of the energy in this province—or is 0.4%, John?

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**Mr O'Toole:** It's 0.4%.

**Mr Jackson:** It's 0.4%, yet this rate increase just for that small portion of the market is going to amount to \$50 million more. Farmers do not consume energy during the summer months. They do in the winter, to keep their livestock warm, but in the summer months they don't. Yet they're being punished by paying higher distribution rates, higher transmission rates and now higher rates they have no means of recovering.

The government went through the charade of a public hearing but refused to acknowledge—I won't have the time this evening to read into the record what the comments are, but I thought one of the most cogent arguments put forward—in fact, it wasn't an argument, it was a plea by the Canadian Association of Retired

Persons. They indicated that the act should be amended “to include poor and low-income seniors in a category of ‘designated customers,’” and that they should be charged the current basic rate “regardless of usage and time.” CARP went on to say that specific conservation plans should be developed for seniors considering health implications and other relevant conditions, and the pattern of electricity usage for seniors should be examined, as it could vary significantly from average pattern uses. Earlier today, I brought to the attention of the House a quote of the then Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, saying these were tragic stories and, “We would protect vulnerable people and that's why we would keep this cap and this is why we have to honour it.”

I have a letter here from a family in Woodstock. The gentleman writes to me, “My wife, Elizabeth, has COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema). Elizabeth requires oxygen 24 hours, seven days a week, combivent inhalation pump treatments six times a day and an air purifier system runs in her room at all times.” This is what keeps this woman alive.

“There is no possible way that I can get my hydro usage down to 750 kilowatts a month. For the last 12 months my average kilowatt reading has been ... 1,400 a month. The medical equipment used for my wife's disease is a necessity and we cannot cut back.”

The letter goes on to explain how difficult this is going to be for these two senior citizens on a fixed income. And we have a Minister of Energy who refuses to listen to this family from Woodstock, to thousands of families in this province like them. Oh, they were very clear prior to October 2. I know exactly what Liberals wanted to say to vulnerable people in this province. Here's what the energy minister today said: He accused our government of abandoning working families and seniors on fixed incomes in favour of corporate profits. And now we have a minister who's saying, “You know what? We've changed our mind. We really don't think consumers need protecting. In fact, it's those poor local distribution companies that have been crying and whining about the billion dollars they didn't get. You know what? The half of the energy system that's paid for by consumers in this province, you're going to have to cough up a billion dollars so that we can ease their corporate pain.” But it's doing nothing for the Hawkins family in Woodstock.

It's unbelievable, comments before and after October 2; it's hard to believe they were even talking about hydro at all.

This is another issues here: What is the government's real agenda? That's a legitimate question because this legislation has hidden within it various clauses and sections which empower the minister—it embodies within him a tremendous amount of power to increase rates and to provide the kinds of benefits to the energy sector that they have been very clear in seeking.

Recently, the minister was quoted in the paper, talking about his recent appointment of Jake Epp to take over as



interim leader of OPG. The Minister of Energy, some time ago when he was in opposition, spoke about—not to privatize elements of hydro. Yet now, as the minister, he's commenting here very clearly: "There's a long history of private generation. We want to make sure we have an attractive investment climate" for them. It's in today's Toronto Star.

So if the real agenda here is to be able to privatize our nuclear facilities, to privatize the construction of new natural gas, then the government should come clean and tell us that is their real agenda. But they are setting in place a foundation that's predicated on one simple premise: Someone has to pay, and you know who that's going to be? The consumer. They're not paying for the raw price of energy; they are paying, in addition, a whole series of expenses and portions of their bill that deal with making it more profitable for that investment to come in and to buy up publicly held hydro assets in our province.

We believe fundamentally on this side of the House that the cap should remain in place at least until 2006, until appropriate planning is put in place to ensure that consumers are protected and that small business is protected. We've established, through information we received from the Ministry of Finance, that the true cost of the cap in this fiscal year will be about \$100 million-plus, not the \$800 million that the minister misspoke in the House a few moments ago.

We had a very aggressive green energy plan, and what I find interesting is, there is not one reference in this bill to green energy or to the production of green energy the way our government's action plan spoke very specifically to green energy. Not only did it have an aggressive plan, it included tax incentives.

I've asked the minister, in committee hearings, "Are you planning to bring forward any of the tax incentives in your tax bill?" "No, we're not." "Are you prepared to bring in energy conservation tax incentives in your energy bill?" He said, "No, we are not."

This is an opportunity lost. Every day lost in this process further separates us from an aggressive green energy program in our province.

We also need time for the local distribution companies, which, for the record, are pre-eminently owned by municipalities. In my opening speech on Bill 4, I referenced the fact that the city of Burlington, where I come from, was given the local public utility. They took \$10 million out of it, they sent it over to the city, and now the city was owed \$10 million by the local utility—which they own. Then they ran down the street to the Ontario Energy Board and said, "Would you please give us permission to raise the rates of hydro for every Burlington customer, because, you know, we have this debt we have to service?"

This is a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar issue for local distribution corporations all over this province, and I think consumers and taxpayers need to be engaged in that discussion. I know for myself, in Burlington, if I'm going to pay that kind of money, I'd like my local utility—which, apparently, I own—to say to me, "You know,

Cam, here's a way that you can actually, in reality, lower your energy consumption if you employ certain changes in habit and so on." But the technology and the metering isn't available.

The Conservation Council of Ontario and several others who presented to the committee a few days ago pointed out that the whole paradigm on which energy pricing is established in this province is: The more you consume, the more profit you make. So there's no incentive built into the system in order to have people chill their utilization and therefore save money. That was Mr and Mrs Hawkins's point. There's nothing they can do to lower their consumption, unless you give them the kind of metering so that they can lower some of their consumption through varying the time at which they actually use—in other words, be able to use power at cheaper times of the day.

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But the government isn't offering any of this, nor is it saying to municipalities that own utilities, "Here is the prescriptive way in which you must spend a quarter of a billion dollars on energy conservation." I asked the minister this question. I said, "Where are the guarantees in the regulatory requirement to force this to be spent on real conservation?" For example, they may decide to take all their utility trucks and the local utility manager's leased car and convert them to propane gas. That would be an energy conservation. It would help their profitability and lower their bottom-line costs, but in no way is that helping me as a consumer in Burlington to lower my hydro bill, nor is it helping the Hawkins family cope with the fact that they have life-sustaining medical equipment in their home that consumes a significant amount of energy.

We believe that by 2006, with an aggressive green power strategy, with wind power, with cogeneration, with using farm waste for thermal power—there are so many innovations out there that we could be promoting and encouraging with tax incentives, with discounts. All manner of approaches have been used around North America. Did this government bring forward one single recommendation in this legislation? Not one.

Why we will not vote for this bill is because its first order of business is to increase the profitability of a whole group in the hydro sector by \$1 billion. That's why we'll be voting against this legislation: because consumer protection should be first and foremost; because consumers should be empowered with tools, and the government should protect consumers by prescribing these codes of conduct to the distribution companies and providing tax incentives or whatever. They are now corporate creatures. They're paying hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes to the Ontario government. That isn't what this bill does, but that's what this bill should be doing. That's what this government should be doing. Instead, they broke faith with the people of Ontario. Instead, they said one thing on their way to an election and maintained that steadfast position. Premier Dalton McGuinty looked into the camera on the night of the



debate, on television interviews, on radio interviews and said, "I will not remove that cap"—and this is his motivation—"because consumers, seniors and vulnerable people need protection." That's what he said. Days after becoming the Premier of this province, after people like the Hawkins family in Woodstock believed in what he was saying, he let go of their hand in Main Street, Ontario, on his way to making sure that the promises he made to his friends on Bay Street would be kept.

He has referenced the profitability of hydro: "It must become very profitable, or else we'll never guarantee new supply." I firmly don't believe that to be true. I know my colleague from the New Democratic Party will be speaking, and he firmly does not believe that one necessarily follows the other.

It strikes me that, given the evidence that Ontario has enjoyed a great hydroelectric system in this province, it has brought us tremendous prosperity. I do not believe that increasing prices and increasing fees to consumers at this fragile time for this public utility is the right course of action. I consider it a reckless course of action. This government, with its majority, will have four years in which to prove whether their course of action was true or not.

I do know that in the spring we'll be looking at a budget. In that budget will be the explanation as to what the Tories' 4.3 consumer protection cap was costing taxpayers. You will find that that is about \$130 million.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** Oh, I don't think so.

**Mr Jackson:** The Management Board chair says he doesn't think so. Well, I have a document that I received from your Minister of Finance's department. For the nine-month period year-to-date you've spent \$99 million. Now, I don't challenge the fact that your paid private consultant, Erik Peters, reported to the media that he saw a report that was almost a year old that suggested that this year's costs might be \$293 million.

The day the minister tabled the legislation, the media asked the question, "How much will the mitigation strategy cost this year?" He didn't have an answer. I asked him for an answer, and his staff, with the assistance of finance, was able to come up with that number. In its first year, it cost \$655 million. We paid that bill. The government of Ernie Eves paid the bill, we balanced the books and in fact we actually paid down a little of our debt. It can be done. But our motivation was to stabilize prices, to truly protect consumers and to build an open strategy of how to resolve the challenges in pricing hydro in Ontario. This government has taken that process from the front burner and put it into the backrooms of corporate Ontario for them to resolve with their billion-dollar increase just how they're going to come up with new pricing for hydro in our province.

So I will not be supporting this legislation. I will not be subjecting seniors and others on fixed incomes to this. As members who are not new to the House will recall, I was one of the first members to call for a cap. I was one of the first members to identify that we needed an

environment in which to stabilize rates so that we could begin planning in earnest to manage the energy challenges in this province. But our motivation always should be to protect consumers who are the most vulnerable in our society. I was proud to support legislation that did that; ironically, so did every Liberal member, including the Minister of Energy and the new Premier, Dalton McGuinty. It was interesting: The reason the Minister of Energy, Mr Duncan, indicated in a letter as to why he was going to vote for our 4.3-cent cap was—and this is what he said in his letter—"We will not force ratepayers to be victimized by partisan politics." That was before October 2. After October 2, we can see this government has broken its trust with the citizens of Ontario.

**Mr O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to follow the member from Burlington with what little time is left.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** About 26 minutes.

**Mr O'Toole:** Actually, there's much to be said. I think it's always important to start at the beginning and to display how little, really, most of us know about this topic. But it is an important topic and I think a really good, important primer on this thing for all members here, including Ms Cansfield, who takes great interest as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, and I'm sure she'll do a wonderful job.

**1950**

I think this is a great quote—it's from the 1996 annual report of what was then Ontario Hydro, which I'll cite after I'm completed. "We've been in business since 1906. We have been pleasing and displeasing the public ever since. We have been 'cussed' and discussed, boycotted and investigated, talked about, lied about, hung up, held up and robbed. The only reason we are staying in business is to see what is going to happen next." That was Sir Adam Beck in May 1922. So this has been a controversial issue.

The idea of power at cost is really a false formula, because fundamentally it's an economic tool. We want to have industry which needs power. If you look at the overall concept at the very beginning of this, about 50% of all the power is in the economic discussion. You might say there's a requirement to have a reserve capacity in the system of about 20%. If you took the total usage of about 26,000 megawatts of power and you took some formula of 10% or 20%, you'd end up with about 5,000 megawatts of power sitting there waiting to be used. Well, about 5,000 megawatts of power represents probably anywhere between \$8 billion and \$15 billion. So you'd have some capital asset—owned by who?—sitting there doing nothing in the event there was a very cold or very hot day. All the conditions would have to meet like some sort of matrix. In the ideal circumstances, though, you'd use the full capacity of the system.

If you really understand it, you have to look at, I believe, in the same report—and these are fundamental documents. For all of us to grapple with this very important discussion is to start with the size and magnitude—there's 306 municipal utilities, there are almost three



million customers, there are 103 large direct customers, and they use 50% of all the power anyway, and they aren't covered by the 4.3 rate or the 4.6, they're not covered by the rate—50% of all the consumption has nothing to do with this discussion, this residential and small business. That's why when I've heard other members speak they don't know what they're speaking of. And that's only through inexperience. I didn't know either until I sat on a number of committees and was taught by, in many cases, civil servants and experts that do this for a living.

The Ontario hydro system includes 69 hydraulic stations—that's water generation—five nuclear stations, six operating fossil fuel stations. The demand contribution of this in 1996 was that 54% was nuclear, 13% was fossil—that's coal, natural gas and oil—26% of the generation was hydraulic and 7% from other sources. There's been much said about the other sources, looking forward: wind and photovoltaic and biomass and other forms of generation. But after all of 1996 and 1995, it has been said by the Minister of Energy that if you look even further back, look at a decade of argument, as has been pointed out to the leader of the NDP here tonight, really this started during the NDP government, about 1993. I can cite in their financial statements; it might be helpful to people.

If you look back at the five-year annual financial operating plan, you see the beginning: the overruns with the Darlington plant, the stop-start again. It wasn't all a problem of design, it was your operating, it was bringing into service—they started to pay taxes the moment they turned the station on. You'll see here in 1992 they actually had an income of \$312 million. They got whacked in 1993; that's the first serious sign of problems, this \$3.6-billion corporate write-off that year—serious problems. There was an agreement then to freeze the rates. Government was subsidizing the rate directly—no question about it. Policy discussion—arguably, we continued it. We didn't unfreeze the rate.

So if the costs are going through the roof, which we all knew they were, and you're freezing the revenue line, you're creating debt. It's a deferred payment plan. You went into the 30-year mortgage plan. If you look back even further, the first sign I saw was in the 1995 annual report, as a footnote in their financial statement, where they changed the life expectancy of a nuclear plant, which was then going to be 25 years, to 40 years. They spread the capital debt, instead of over 25 years, the expected life of a nuclear plant, to 40 years. Guess what that did to your mortgage? It's like getting a second mortgage. It made the debt look as if it was manageable.

But if you look at the annual reports, and they're the best source of real, honest, audited information, they in fact show the growing debt. It talks about the stranded debt in some great detail. In fact, there's a whole section here in the 1997 report—section 19, page 67—“Industrial Changes and Stranded Debt.” It was no surprise that the Macdonald commission came along. If you don't look to the history here and think you're going to solve this—

I've got documents that are available to you. They're not mine; they're public documents. Your plan to eliminate coal? Good luck. There's not one expert who says you can do it. You may want to do it. I want to do it. But how are you going to replace it? You're going to have to buy the power, and if you're going to buy the power, you're going to pay for it. You're probably going to buy it as peak power from Ohio, which is dirty power.

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** Windmills.

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, wind generation. Yes, you got it. Pay attention, because there's a lot more on wind generation. You'll be lucky on the renewable portfolio standards, which we approved, by the way, to get about 4% of your generating capacity out of wind. I believe there's a lot of room for growth. In fact, the highest renewable portfolio standard in the world—it might surprise you, by the way—is actually Texas. George Bush is the former governor. Can you imagine? They have the highest RPS—the renewable portfolio standards—in Texas.

Under this 1997 report that I'm referring to, I think it's important to start here and say that in Ontario, in common with many other government public utilities, the development of this asset base has resulted in a highly leveraged financial structure of the corporation. Hydro recognized that its existing debt load is too great and that it is over-leveraged to compete in future restructured markets. In fact, in the white paper on directions for change creating competition, it clearly indicated that they had a stranded debt of about \$16 billion. What they had to do is restructure the debt equity picture. They could never have gone public. There was no money in it. They knew, everyone knew—in fact, Mr Phillips and Mr Kwinter, both of whom appeared on these committees. Mr Kwinter was part of the IIPA, the independent assessment which resulted in the NAOP, the nuclear asset optimization plan. I hate to use these acronyms. The other member on the committee was Sean Conway. As I said earlier, I have a great deal of respect for him. He knows a lot more than I do about this topic.

But it's important to look to the history here. That's really the point of my figure here. Everyone who was even closely paying attention knew that this was an economic tool of government policy. It had accumulated huge debt, huge overruns. In fact, if you even look at the current discussion in the Toronto Star, which I don't read normally—they give it to me free now. Even when it's free, it's too much. It's over the top, but it does have some context that I think is worth reading, so I do read it. In fact, I think a lot of the points they make—and they've made many of the same arguments, even though the subtlety of it all, part of it could be an anti-nuclear argument. But what are you going to replace it with? That's the argument. As I said before, about 60% or 70% of our base load is nuclear.

Nuclear, by the way, is not a peaking generation fuel source. It's either running full out or it's out. The peaking power is going to have to be natural gas. Look at the futures—unaffordable. I've got reports here from finan-



cial investors that know that natural gas cogeneration is out. Futures on natural gas—out of the question. So get ready, Duncan; you've got to read all of the analysis here. I don't profess to only read what others write, but I do read it. If you go natural gas, you think power is expensive now? Good luck, because there are capacity delivery problems, there are capacity storage problems, and there's a huge demand in the American market that will pump the price up, because it's all New York-based pricing. The mercantile exchange sets the price, not Canada. They'll buy it all. They've got the interconnects bid.

I think one of the more important and more neutral points that I could discuss in the very few minutes that were left to me to speak by my good friend from Burlington, who has probably gone home now—

*Interjections.*

**Mr O'Toole:** He's probably gone home to study further on this issue.

I guess my thesis is the report—

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** No, he's probably watching on television. He wants to get a real copy of this to study.

The select committee on alternative fuels did a lot of work. I see one of the ministers of the government here today who served with great diligence and great contribution—I'm not surprised she's in cabinet, actually—Mrs Bountrogianni, who was the Vice-Chair of that committee. I know the work she contributed formed a great basis for her then becoming a minister. With the responsibility she has today, she's going to need the experience.

2000

Anyway, it was chaired by Doug Galt. It was an all-party committee. Jim Bradley was on that. I'm surprised he's not the energy minister right now. Ernie Parsons—I'm surprised he's still here. Anyway, there are other members here. Marilyn Churley was on that committee as well. That committee actually made a number of very strong recommendations. It was a unanimously endorsed report, as I understand it, with 141 recommendations.

The whole point of mentioning this in the context: Much of the debate we're talking about had already started. I've tried to point out that it started about 1993. Then there was a formalized commission, the Macdonald commission report. I spoke with Floyd Laughren, and Floyd told me they knew the gig was up. They knew it; they were haemorrhaging ideas. To anyone here that presumes this is a uniquely Liberal idea, I would say all governments are part of the problem and all governments are part of the solution. I think that all-party committees I've sat on—I've referred to the NAOP committee, the nuclear asset optimization plan committee; excellent committee, excellent membership—a great deal of work was done. As well, I've just mentioned the select committee on alternative fuels, an all-party committee. The work they had done set the very basic foundation.

I want to go on to say a couple of more things about the work that has been done and will continue to be done as long as we're prepared to work in a non-partisan

fashion as we look at having reliable—and one of the words that he keeps missing is “affordable”—sources of energy, which is an economic tool for this province. I have to refer to one more committee that I was fortunate to be part of. Starting in 2002, then-Premier Eves stated in our budget that there would be an energy conservation and supply task force formed. That task force was formed and I was fortunate to be the only elected member on it, amongst an array of experts including the president of the power workers' association and other eminent people whom I was able to listen to for a long time. I did learn a lot, and they came up with a huge amount of information which each of us at our level could begin to understand.

One of the biggest things is that the idea that when we opened the market we had the very worst problems—the nuclear asset plan that I talked about earlier, its plan was to optimize production from nuclear stations. In fact, all parties on that committee agreed—there was Mr Kwinter and there was Mr Conway—that it was going to take between \$5 billion and \$8 billion to bring up the Bruce plant and the Pickering plant. They knew that. It's all public record—\$5 billion to \$8 billion. That's a fact; I'm not making this up. So if somebody thinks it's a surprise, what is a surprise is the fact that there was a lack of accountability going through the process even though the 39 recommendations from that committee indicated there were supposed to be regular, open briefings of the ministry of energy, science and technology.

What has been said, and I think this is worth citing and I think it's probably the only thing that I'll ever quote from the Toronto Star, but sometimes they do get it right—and they talked at great length about the cultural problems in Hydro. This is probably important for us to learn. I don't know if it has changed. I honestly don't. I could tell you, without diminishing my own importance, the reason I know a lot more than I'm probably given to be noted for on this thing is that I'm fortunate I live in Clarington, which is home to Darlington, probably the world's second-largest nuclear plant. It's about 3,600 megawatts of power—it's actually bigger than Pickering. Pickering is of an older generation—it may be larger when it's completely retrofitted, if indeed it is. I'm sure the member from Ajax-Pickering-Uxbridge, Mr Arthurs, is hopeful that it is, because as he said, they do pay a lot of tax, and yet they don't use the library or the swimming pools. It's that industrial corporate tax that you really want to get a hold of.

They're looking at this thing here. They're talking to Tom Adams, who's a great complainer, really. “Adams argues there's a long-running malaise: From the time the Hydro-Electric Commission was created in 1906, it and its successors made bad decisions and spent freely, as if they were immune from the consequences of taking unwise risks.

“James Mavor, a professor of political economy at the University of Toronto saw the dangers nearly 90 years ago, Adams says.

“Nothing is more usual in public enterprises of this kind than to disregard the element of risk,” is what is



said in this article. The risk assessment that was done by the most recent report, called the Epp report, was the disregard for evaluating the whole term of risk. It is 90 years ago that James Mavor condemned them.

"The commission's first project—the generating station at Queenston, on the Niagara River—went three times over budget. And the pattern was set." Three times over budget—in fact, it was two or three years late too.

I can remember, because I was a local or regional councillor at the time, when the Darlington plant was coming on. It was on again, off again, on again, off again. It was originally scoped out at \$4 billion, and it finished costing \$14 billion. Am I surprised at Pickering being three times or four times over? No, that's the pattern. Professor Mavor said that 90 years ago. It's the culture.

Who do you get to come in to run the Candu reactors? They're uniquely Canadian. They're not the same as the American or European reactors. It's our own knowledge. In fact, it isn't even the province that inspects them; it's the federal government.

**Mr Berardinetti:** The atomic energy commission.

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, ACB—it's not called ACB now; it's some other name, but it's the same thing. The regulator is actually the federal government, as it should be. There are other nuclear reactors throughout Canada, so there are federal standards and enforcement.

The point I'm trying to make in the very few minutes left is that there's a huge history. I've cited Sir Adam Beck. Right from the beginning, he said this thing is not solvable. We've had two or three commissions that I've just briefly brought to your attention, including looking at alternatives into the future. We see it as an economic tool. There may indeed be some argument for Mr Hampton's suggestion that it should be public power; I wouldn't say that. But I know there are members in my constituency who refer to themselves as the group of seven. They're eminently qualified people. There's Henry Sissons, Bob Strickert and a couple of guys with PhDs. They're brilliant guys. They teach at Trent University. They're called the group of seven, and they tell me that power generation at least should remain in public hands.

What does that say to innovation? I talked to people who melt rock at St Marys Cement in Bowmanville—they have kilns that actually melt the limestone. They're burning at 3000 degrees. Why aren't they creating electricity: boiling water, turning a turbine and cogenerating? Because it wasn't permitted under the power corporations act. So the vertical public monopoly has insulated itself from any accountability.

That's why I believe if you compare today—I'm not prepared, nor do I know enough, to say that Bruce's recovery is better than Pickering's. But clearly the evidence—the timelines, the budgets—indicate that Duncan Hawthorne has done a great job. Congratulations, Duncan and Bruce Energy. I would say that whoever is in charge at Pickering hasn't done a great job, and I'm only quoting the Toronto Star. So I think Dwight better ask for some ideas and questions here.

That's really only part of this bill. This bill, unfortunately, is obfuscating the real discussion, and that is that prior to the election you promised to freeze power. That's like the GST debate. I will never consider the Liberals federally again, because I know they'll say anything to get elected, they'll do anything once they're elected and somehow they get away with it. I don't get it. They can strangle people, like Chrétien did—he's leaving tomorrow, thank God—and get away with it. Honestly, I don't get it.

When it comes to the issue of whether the current government is up to the job, I'm prepared to sit on an all-party committee. If they have this blue-ribbon panel—it's a bunch of frigging ponies from the Liberal election team—then I think you're starting off on very slight footing. The people know that this issue, from the little time I've had to tell them, is not new. You aren't going to fix it.

## 2010

There's a definite citation that I want to get on the record here. I think it's very clear. This addresses not just your obfuscation on the price freeze, which is a very serious problem—it's called Pants on Fire. That's the only way I can say it. It's the Pants on Fire Resolution.

This one here is the one on your solution on coal. The solution on coal is even more—you have no idea, except that the industry has written to you. Your minister knows that clean coal technology is well on the way and the gasification of coal is well on the way, and the industry itself, not just Sherritt but the other producers, are working on the cleaning of coal, what they call clean coal or the gasification of coal. "A coal phase-out achieved exclusively by switching to natural gas would raise electricity rates by 3% to 5%." So if you take Nanticoke and Lambton and the other plants down, there's a 3% to 5% increase, which I am going to attribute to Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Energy. He knows it. I just told him. It's on the record today. It's me, and I'll cite it because it's from the New York Stock Exchange review on future pricing. Obviously his ministry is reading it, if he isn't. He just reads what they tell him to read anyway. I think if he's looking at the whole issue, the solution here, if you look at the longer term, then he's got a serious problem, and the coal industry, the clean coal alliance, admits it as well.

In fact, as part of that electricity committee on conservation and supply, the experts there—and they're not political—have said unanimously that you cannot eliminate coal as a peaking power. I believe you should be focusing entirely on clean coal and providing tools to consumers like interval meters and time-of-rate meters in their homes so that they can actually determine when to shut off the air conditioner, the television, the freezer and other appliances that are high consumers, like hot water heaters. This is not new technology. It's technology that would actually put some control in the hands of the consumer, who would then know, "Hey, electricity is 7 cents a kilowatt. Turn off the hot water heater," or if you're going away on two weeks' vacation, turn off the hot water heater. Do some practical things.



But right now, today, the consumer pays a blended rate. It doesn't matter if you use the power between 8 in the morning and 8 at night anyway, because you pay a blended rate. I believe in conservation; I believe it's one of the solutions, but give the consumer some control, give the consumer some power. Otherwise, you're forcing, as the member from Burlington has very admirably pointed out, seniors on fixed incomes who are devastated and those businesses like Mr Caruwana—he owns a deli in my riding in Bowmanville on the main street, and wrote a letter to the editor and said to me and to all of us that he has no power because the Ministry of Health requires him to keep his coolers at a certain temperature to keep the meat and other things free of any sort of contamination. So he has no control. He has no price elasticity.

The final thing is, you can't store electricity and it's price-inelastic. In other words, your consumption doesn't go down when the price goes up. It's price-inelastic; it's a simple economic thing. The seniors on fixed incomes have no choice in this and you aren't paying any attention to them.

Thank you for listening, and I hope to have more time on another day.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I hope that I'm going to get a chance to debate here this evening, so I'm not going to actually comment on the details of the bill, as was spoken to by both the Conservative members, but I did want to follow up on a point made by the member from Burlington.

In his remarks, the member from Burlington made it clear how unhappy he was that there were only two days in committee for this particular bill, how unfair that seemed to be because it didn't give time for people to come and make presentations and that there were also limits around the amendments. I agree that that is a huge problem, but I have to tell the member from Burlington and those who are watching tonight, you folks brought that on yourselves. I don't know what your House leader and what your whip were doing when they agreed to the programming motion, of which Bill 4 is a part.

I go back to government notice of motion number 13, which was moved on December 2. There were three government bills, one opposition day and two government notices of motion that were moved. All of those things were time-allocated by the government, Bill 4 included, so there was only going to be two days of clause-by-clause and public hearings and there was only going to be one day of third reading. That's what we're debating right now.

It was your whip who came forward and said to the Speaker, and encouraged the Speaker, to rule in favour of the programming motion, and said the following: "It is the position of the official opposition that there is a case to be made for you to rule government notice of motion 13 in order." He went on to say, "After extensive consultations with the government, our House leader, Bob Runciman, has agreed to a pilot project to timetable the

business of the House to allow for expanded debate on the issues that are of legitimate interest to the people of Ontario." He said further, "I would submit to you that proper notice has been given," and he encouraged the Speaker to rule in favour. So we are in this mess because you also supported it, and I think we've set a terrible precedent for other business in this House in the future.

**Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre):** I listened intently to the speech from the member for Durham and, in particular, the member for Burlington, who served on the committee. I've got to tell you that I really objected to the suggestion that the members on the government side of that committee were not listening to the deputants before that committee. We listened very intently to what was said.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Canadian Association of Retired Persons raised some excellent points, and we'll be working with them in the future as we work on our energy policy and bring forward our energy policy. We listened very intently to the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance. In fact, in their report they said, "We're very pleased that the government, within only a month of being in office, has moved so quickly on the issue of electricity." We listened very intently to their views, and they brought up some excellent suggestions. We listened very intently to the Conservation Council of Ontario, when they said that Bill 4 addresses their first point admirably, their first point being that to price energy to promote conservation is a very, very important thing to do. They congratulated the minister on the bill.

Considering that the member opposite was part of a government that didn't allow 95% of their legislation to go through committees so that people didn't have a chance to voice their concerns at all, I found the comments to be passing strange. Frankly, I think we are showing, through our committee, that we are here to participate. We have an extremely strong bench on this side of the House that will be participating greatly. Just because we don't support some of the amendments moved by the member does not mean that we weren't paying attention, does not mean that we weren't working hard on our side of the House. We simply did not agree with the motions moved by the member opposite because they weren't in the best interests, we felt, of the bill.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments tonight on the speeches made by my colleagues Cam Jackson from Burlington and John O'Toole from the great riding of Durham. As you can see, both of these gentlemen have done a lot of homework on the preparation for their speeches this evening.

I just want to take—and I'm really sorry. In this job, I'm always having a problem with the ridings, and it's probably just as difficult for you, but Mr Duguid just mentioned that when we were in government, 95% of our bills never went to committee. I don't think anything could be further from the truth. Some bills didn't go to committee, but it might have been 10% or 12%. It was never even close to 95%. So I'd like to correct him on that.



I think what's important today, and the real issue that the taxpayers are concerned about—because certainly there's no question that hydro is an issue and hydro has been an issue for the last two or three decades and it will be an issue for many years in the future. I think it's a fact that this government that was elected based on a whole series of promises has basically gone against the citizens of the province and has reversed its decision on the rate cap. I think that's what hurts people more than anything; that's what many of our constituents are saying to us on weekends. I know I had a couple of letters and e-mails just today from small businesses and farmers who are very concerned about the lifting of the cap. No question they understand some of the issues behind it, but it's the fact that it may hurt some of the job creation opportunities and even the very existence of these businesses in the future.

Again, I thank my two colleagues for their comments tonight, and I look forward to further debate.

2020

**Mr Hampton:** While there was much that I disagreed with in the comments of the two spokespeople for the Conservative Party—it's still the Conservative Party, isn't it?

**Mr Dunlop:** Yes, Progressive Conservative Party.

**Mr Hampton:** OK, good. I'm never sure. Things are happening so fast these days.

**Mr O'Toole:** Are you the Green Party or the NDP?

**Mr Hampton:** The Speaker has even agreed now that we're the NDP, and that took a lot.

I will agree with him on a couple of points—and people across Ontario need to know this—and that is that the government opposite and the Premier, before the election, said over and over again that they were going to continue with the rate cap that was in place until 2006. That is the promise they made repeatedly to the people of Ontario. When they made that promise, we all knew the rate cap had cost \$800 million so far. That was in the media. We knew that in June, July, August and September. Everyone knew there was a huge cost overrun at the Pickering nuclear station; that too was public knowledge. Notwithstanding the fact that Mr McGuinty and his colleagues knew the rate cap was very expensive, knew there were huge cost overruns at Pickering, they went ahead and made this promise.

Now they want to pretend that the cost overruns at Pickering are a surprise, that the cost of the rate cap being in the neighbourhood of \$800 million is a surprise. It is not a surprise at all. That was known when Liberals made that promise. What is clear is that they never intended to keep the promise; that was just something for election-time consumption.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member from Burlington in response.

**Mr Jackson:** First of all, I'd like to thank my colleague from Durham for his eloquent presentation. However, rumours that I had gone home for the evening were grossly exaggerated. In fact, I was enjoying a chicken salad sandwich with the Liberal member for Eglinton-

Lawrence, and I want to thank him for sharing dinner with me; otherwise, I wouldn't have had dinner. So thank you.

The member for Nickel Belt: Perhaps it's the absence of the member for Welland this evening that causes me to remind you that we don't always agree with every decision made by our caucus.

**Ms Martel:** Very good, Cam.

**Mr Jackson:** I might even concur with your sentiments, so I don't take them as negative. I'm pleased that you underscored them for me, because it might be inappropriate for me to suggest exactly what you said, but thank you.

The member for Kenora-Rainy River: I appreciated his comments. I have stated on several occasions that although I don't agree with everything he says about energy policy, I respect the fact that he cares very passionately about it and he has not been afraid to articulate that. Perhaps in light of the broken promises of the Liberal government, it may cause the public to revisit the position that they had taken.

I'm just going to reiterate very briefly that the brand new Liberal government broke faith with the people of Ontario. They betrayed a trust that they had been given on the fundamental issue of affordability in energy prices in this province. I believe that is not sound public policy when it is built upon such a fragile broken promise that has such horrendous significance to so many people, and that's why we will be voting against this legislation.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre):** Our government is delivering on its commitment to provide a responsible approach to electricity pricing, one that better reflects the true cost of electricity in Ontario. We are putting forward a pricing plan that first and foremost would protect Ontario's consumers by providing them with fair, predictable and stable rates.

Under the previous government, we saw energy pricing that simply didn't look after the interests of consumers or taxpayers. In the summer and fall of 2002, many consumers, without knowing why, found themselves paying volatile market prices for electricity. Working families, small businesses and individuals on fixed incomes were terrified by the uncertainty this created. In response, late last year the previous government imposed a cap of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour on the retail price of electricity. They applied this cap to 98% of Ontario electricity consumers, virtually everyone except large commercial and industrial customers. They went further and capped transmission rates, distribution rates and the wholesale market service charge at current levels, a freeze which was to last until 2006.

Well, you can freeze prices but you can't freeze time. As time moved on and the market prices continued to be higher than the artificial 4.3-cent cap, the cost of the cap mounted. The electricity price freeze is contributing to the \$5.6-billion deficit at a rate of hundreds of millions of dollars a year. In fact, since the price cap was put in place a year ago, it has resulted in a net cost to the government



of Ontario of over \$800 million. This simply is not sustainable. If allowed to continue, the price cap would have cost about \$300 million per year for the next two years. And it is the taxpayers of Ontario who would ultimately have to pay the price, and not just today's taxpayers, but our children, the taxpayers and citizens of tomorrow.

There have been suggestions that if only this 4.3-cent plan had been allowed to run its course, somehow it would have all come out in the wash, that it would have been revenue-neutral and it wouldn't have cost the taxpayers a cent. Wishes sometimes don't come true, and the Peters report clearly highlights that the previous government's 4.3-cent plan simply would never have paid for itself with the prices we have seen.

As I've pointed out, over the past 18 months, from May 1, 2002, through October 31, 2003, the previous government's wishful thinking has saddled Ontario taxpayers with costs of \$800 million, and these costs are mounting by the day. Revenue neutrality was certainly a wish of the previous government, but definitely not a reality. This government realizes that Ontario operates in the real world, with real challenges that require realistic approaches.

But perhaps, some may suggest, within the 18 months and the \$800 million, there is a glimmer of hope that things would turn around and the previous government's plan might work. Ministry staff have dissected the 18 months past to see if such a trend was anything but hope and wishful thinking. Another wish went unfulfilled.

For the period May 1, 2002, through March 31, 2003, the net cost of the 4.3-cent plan, as reported in the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp's 2003 annual report, was \$665 million. From April 1, 2003, through October 31, 2003, the gross cost of the 4.3-cent price was \$283 million. Even after receiving money back from Ontario Power Generation, the resulting net cost to the government and the people of Ontario was between \$100 million and \$140 million. Is that a glimmer of hope, perhaps? Not really, because when you look at projections for the full fiscal year, from April 1, 2003, to March 31, 2004, as former Provincial Auditor Erik Peters does, the net cost shoots up again to \$293 million. So this plan would simply not have paid for itself—not this year, not next year, and not the year after that.

#### 2030

To make things worse, municipal utilities were unable, as a result of the cap, to recoup an estimated \$650 million to \$750 million in funds they'd already spent related to electricity market operations. This was money they didn't have to improve local distribution systems and to keep local systems operating smoothly. As I have said, while you can freeze prices, you cannot freeze time, and distribution systems do require upkeep over time.

On October 2, the people of this province chose change and a government that would give them the straight goods, not wishful thinking. Under our proposed legislation, our government would get rid of the artificially low price cap of 4.3 cents. A new plan would introduce a responsible pricing structure that is fair and

predictable for consumers, that reflects the true cost of electricity, that gets rid of a subsidy that is completely and totally unsustainable, and sends a clear and powerful conservation message to the people of Ontario.

Under the proposed legislation, an interim pricing plan would take effect April 1, 2004. The first 750 kilowatt hours consumed in any month would be priced at 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour. Consumption above that level would be priced at a higher rate of 5.5 cents. This will truly reflect the cost of electricity in Ontario. Since the proposed interim pricing plan would not take effect until April 1, consumers would have a chance to review how they use their energy, to take conservation measures and, as a result, to limit the impact on their electricity bills.

Under our proposed legislation, the interim pricing plan would stay in place until an independent regulator, the Ontario Energy Board, develops new mechanisms for setting prices in the future. The Ontario Energy Board's new mechanisms would be in place as soon as possible, and no later than May 1, 2005.

The interim prices that have been set are fair and reasonable. Both the 4.7-cent price and the 5.5-cent price that consumers would be asked to pay are based on forecasts of the actual cost of power. The reasonable range of Ontario electricity price projections over the near term, verified by consultants, market participants and the market itself, is likely anywhere from 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour to 5.8 cents per kilowatt hour. We are confident these numbers are reasonable, as the average price since January 1, 2003, now almost one year ago, has been 5.67 cents. That's certainly within the range of our plan, but shockingly more than the former government's 4.3-cent price cap.

There have been comments placed around the need to deal with the benefit of the 750 threshold for apartment buildings. As the minister indicated in the committee hearings, that is currently being handled by regulation and that issue will be dealt with.

While any price increase in any commodity places an additional burden on consumers, especially consumers with modest incomes, we have made sure that the increases proposed under our plan have as manageable an impact as possible on consumers. In fact, fully 45% of all Ontario consumers would see less than a \$5-per-month increase on their monthly bills, as they use on average less than 750 kilowatt hours per month. If the interim pricing turns out to be higher than the average market rate, all eligible consumers would receive a credit after the Ontario Energy Board implements its pricing mechanisms.

By ensuring that the Ontario Energy Board, an independent body, sets future prices, we can be sure that electricity prices in Ontario will be regulated on the basis of what is in the public interest. This is certainly a dramatic departure from what we have seen from the previous government.

At the same time, we're also taking steps to allow the Ontario Energy Board to protect and renew our electricity grid, by ensuring reasonable charges for the



delivery of electricity. Beginning March 1, 2004, local distribution companies would be allowed to recoup, over the next four years, some of the costs that the previous government had put on hold. This would ease the tremendous financial burden that these companies, the vast majority of which are owned by municipalities across this province, have had to face.

As of March 1, 2005, local distribution companies would be allowed to take the next step to move toward a commercial return, but only on the condition that they reinvest the equivalent of one year's worth of these additional monies in conservation and demand management programs. This represents an investment in new conservation initiatives of approximately \$225 million—one of the largest investments in conservation of its kind in the history of Ontario.

While the previous government talked about conservation, investment in green energy and renewables, this government actually intends to do something meaningful for conservation, for investment in green energy and for renewables.

We are committed to phasing out coal-fired generation by 2007. We will do this in a responsible way that sees new, cleaner forms of generation brought on stream as a replacement for coal.

We will also move forward in implementing a renewable portfolio standard to help facilitate the development of greener, renewable sources of energy.

Our government will be working hard with other stakeholders to build a greater awareness and understanding in Ontario of the importance and opportunities of conservation and wise energy use.

Our pricing plan is just one step in this government's approach to strengthening Ontario's electricity sector and ensuring that it provides reliability and affordability for a prosperous Ontario. Again, the first step is to protect Ontarians by ensuring a fair and predictable solution to electricity pricing, and that is what this legislation is intended to do.

This plan, Bill 4, which we are voting on today for third reading, ensures that our government, and ultimately Ontario taxpayers, are not subsidizing electricity consumption at the expense of our ability to invest in the priorities of the people of Ontario, priorities such as health care and education. The plan of the previous government didn't do that. Instead, it placed a hopeless burden on taxpayers that would take years, not wishful thinking, to eliminate.

We're giving the people of Ontario the straight goods. We firmly believe that our plan is in the public interest and is a major step toward ensuring a safe, reliable and sustainable supply of energy for the people of Ontario.

I'm proud to stand here today in support of the bill.

No matter how you slice it, no matter how you dice it, the Tory policy has already cost taxpayers \$800 million, and it's counting an estimated \$300 million in each of the next two years. This is not revenue-neutral at all; it is simply wishful thinking that it might be. Although the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP would like us to

keep a bad policy for the sake of keeping a poor policy, we don't keep poor policies; what we do is respond, as a responsible government, to making the changes we need to make to move forward.

We're also putting in place a plan to deal with the issue of conservation that addresses the need for the use of such options as interval meters or time-of-use meters, looking to develop a strategy, in the short, medium and long term, to introduce conservation and energy measures to all Ontarians so they can understand and acknowledge their own use of electricity and by doing so change their habits so that when they use their electricity, they know what they're paying for and what they're using.

On behalf of my colleagues, I'm pleased to stand here and say that I'm in support of third reading of this bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr O'Toole:** It is indeed my pleasure to respond to the member, who is the parliamentary assistant to the minister. I just want to take up a couple of points in the very brief time. She did mention something that may have slipped by the viewers, which was another planned tax increase. It was when she said that the LDCs, the local distribution companies, in March 2004 and again in March 2005 would be allowed to raise their revenue. I gather it's going to get up to a 9% return on investment. I guess the viewer, the consumer, you in your home, know full well that you can only expect higher and higher taxes over the next—I think they will probably last four years. It's 2004 and 2005, but I'm sure it will just continue relentlessly.

**2040**

In my earlier comments, I had forgotten most of the notes I had prepared. The committee I wanted to mention—because I know most of these members would be proud to know they're not just lost to history—is the select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs. The membership list was as follows: Derwyn Shea, the MPP for High Park-Swansea, as the Chair, an eminently respected fellow—I spoke to him last night; he's an Anglican minister and a person of great integrity—Monte Kwinter from Wilson Heights, who was at that time a simple MPP like the rest of us, was Vice-Chair and eminently qualified to do that, a Liberal member who co-chaired with a government member; Sean Conway, who was the member for Renfrew North, now occupied by our member, Mr Yakabuski, who managed to take that in what I call the red tide, often associated with kelp; Doug Galt, who was the MPP for Northumberland; and Floyd Laughren, who was the NDP member from Nickel Belt, an extremely competent member, very well respected—not that good a Treasurer, but none the less a member whom I had a lot of respect for. He sort of ran into some financial difficulties.

**Ms Martel:** I listened with interest to the comments made by the member from Etobicoke Centre. I think the point I want to focus on—and I hope I paraphrase her correctly—is that essentially we're here dealing with a bill tonight that breaks a Liberal promise because the



Liberals somehow discovered that the rate cap wasn't revenue-neutral.

It was well known at the time the rate cap was being imposed last November that of course it wasn't going to be revenue-neutral. How could it be? What we were dealing with after the market opening last May, right through to November 11 when the Premier had to impose the rate cap, was a series of increasing hydro bills for people across the province. Deregulation didn't result in lower rates; it resulted in huge, skyrocketing hydro rates, and Conservative and Liberal members in this House were running for cover, trying to get away from that huge increase. So it was clear that when you intervened in the market, because the open market wasn't working, just like it hadn't worked in California and Montana and Alberta—when the government had to massively intervene in the market with the rate cap, of course the rate cap was going to hide the price of private power, of course someone was going to pay for that and of course that was going to be the taxpayers of Ontario. It was no surprise to anyone, Liberals included. There was no way in the world the rate cap was going to be revenue-neutral. It was going to cost, and cost dearly.

The sad part about it is that the Liberals knew that then, they knew that when they supported the bill and they knew that going into the election, but that didn't stop them from promising that the rate cap would stay in place until 2006. What is clear is that they didn't have any intention of keeping that election promise.

**Mr Delaney:** I'd like to acknowledge the well-researched comments made by the member for Etobicoke Centre and to sum up with a few brief remarks.

Bill 4 will promote a safe, reliable and sustainable supply of energy for the future. Bill 4 is a means of keeping this government's promise to Ontarians. Bill 4 is a major step toward attracting new electricity supply to Ontario, to sustain our present and future needs. Bill 4 sends a clear signal that Ontario will deal with electricity issues in a practical, sensible and transparent way. Bill 4 reaffirms our commitment to modernize Ontario's electrical system. Bill 4 helps us attract new supply. It encourages conservation. Bill 4 helps Ontario deliver cleaner energy to its people.

The previous government just didn't create any new supply in their years of office. Pickering wasn't properly maintained. Some 4,600 megawatts of power was offline. These problems are expected to cost us \$3 billion. Repairs are years behind schedule. We're facing supply shortages. It's time to get on with it.

Others agree. Some of the key endorsers of the removal of the price cap are the Ontario Medical Association, the Sierra Club of Canada, the Ontario Public Health Association, the Clean Air Partnership, the Environmental Alliance, the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance, the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association, the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, Greenpeace Canada, the Muskoka Lakes Association, the Georgian Bay Association, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Independent Power Producers' Society of Ontario.

**Mr Jackson:** I want to acknowledge the words of the member from Etobicoke Centre. I have had the pleasure of knowing her for many years in our role as trustees, and I welcome her to the House.

I was pleased that she put on the record that I'm not the only person in the House to confirm that the true cost in the first year of the cap was \$655 million and not the \$800 million that the Minister of Energy said earlier this evening. I want to thank the member opposite for correcting her minister.

I do want to indicate that when she talked about the fact that a quarter of the billion dollars in funding that will be handed over to local distribution companies from consumers has to go to conservation measures, she failed to indicate to the House and to the citizens of Ontario that this bill enables all those local distribution companies to go back to the Ontario Energy Board immediately. So not only is it the ones they've already approved, worth a billion; they can begin the process of going back to see them.

Who are the largest beneficiaries of the local distribution companies? Clearly it's the municipalities, who own most of them. It strikes me that municipalities are now engaged in the process of taking money out of one consumer's pocket and putting it into another consumer's pocket at city hall, and the government is complicit in encouraging this conduct through the bill.

What I find interesting is that we've identified so many senior citizens who would be adversely affected, and yet we've not heard one word from the member for Kingston and the Islands, the minister responsible not only for seniors but also for AMO. As the previous speaker indicated, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario absolutely loves this bill, because they are the major beneficiaries of the billion dollars.

Liberals are doing what Liberals do best: They are getting taxpayers to pay somebody else's bill and they're going to get the credit.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mrs Cansfield:** I'm delighted to be able to reiterate that you're quite correct: The first year was \$655 million. But at the end of the day, as I said, no matter how you slice it or dice it, it's still \$800 million for the 18-month period of May 1, 2002, to October 31, 2003, and \$800 million is a great deal of money.

I also find it absolutely fascinating that everybody really quite agrees that in 2006 they would lift the cap because it wasn't sustainable. The member from Nickel Belt agrees that it didn't work to begin with, and we're saying it definitely doesn't work either. So I anticipate that everybody's in support of this bill at one point or another.

The other thing I'd like to mention—I assume most members would know, but maybe the people who are listening to this telecast may not—is that we do have the opportunity to address through regulation many of the issues that have been identified, and that that's not unusual, and actually quite typical, when bills are brought forward. To suggest there won't be ways and means of



dealing with some of the issues that are being brought forward to us is incomplete and actually misleading. We will be able to.

At the end of the day, we really do quite agree—

**Mr Jackson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the member opposite to withdraw the statement.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member, withdraw the statement.

**Mr O'Toole:** Resign.

**Mrs Cansfield:** Resign?

I beg your pardon, Speaker?

2050

**The Acting Speaker:** Would you withdraw what you said?

**Mrs Cansfield:** What did I say that was—

**The Acting Speaker:** You know what you said. Can you withdraw it?

**Mr O'Toole:** "Misleading."

**Mrs Cansfield:** Oh, "misleading." OK. I withdraw. I'm not sure what it was, but it's fine. I do withdraw.

What I am suggesting to you is that there are ways and means that we can address the issue, and I believe we have those in the regulations that are going forward and that in fact this bill is a responsible response to the issues of electricity and the chaos this province is in dealing with it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Martel:** It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate on Bill 4 tonight, a bill which essentially substitutes a Liberal rate cap for the Conservative rate cap on private power. And no, we are very much opposed to private power and have been saying from the get-go and now, during this bill, and last year when the Conservatives brought in the rate cap, supported by the Liberals, that we should be dealing with legislation that brings back public power to the province of Ontario.

We're also here dealing with a bill you could call the broken Liberal promise bill, because it was this very same Liberal government during the election campaign who said very clearly that the rate cap they supported last fall was going to be in place until 2006. Let me just reinforce where that was said. Here in the Liberal election platform it says the following: "We will keep the price cap in place until 2006. We do not believe that you should pay the price for the government's mistakes."

I note as well that in an editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen*, dated Friday, September 19, 2003, Mr McGuinty had the following to say, and I quote again: "It will take time to rebuild our hydro system, so we will keep electricity rates where they are until 2006."

What's interesting about the bill, over and above the fact that the Liberals are clearly breaking an election promise, is that the bill really does provide concrete confirmation that the Liberal energy policy is exactly the same as the Conservative energy policy. Neither one, in terms of those two parties' support of hydro privatization and deregulation, has been good for the province of Ontario, just as it hasn't been good in Montana and

Alberta and California and everywhere else that hydro privatization and deregulation have been tried.

It's worth reinforcing that in fact the Liberal policy on hydro privatization and deregulation has always been the same as the Conservative policy. I go back to a fund-raising letter that was sent out to the big guys on Bay Street. This was dated October 31, 2001: "Dear"—it's blanked out. It says the following: "We are writing to invite you to a reception to meet Dalton McGuinty, leader of the official opposition. Dalton was elected as MPP for Ottawa South in 1990 and leader of the Ontario Liberal Party in 1996. Prior to becoming leader, Dalton was the opposition energy critic from September 1990 to July 1993. Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario." God bless. Send your 350 bucks to have supper with Dalton McGuinty, because he's going to find a place for you in Ontario's private energy market.

That wasn't the only confirmation of the fact that the Liberals support hydro privatization and deregulation. I think I'm going to read a few more quotes into the record, just to make the point.

December 20, 2001, in the *Windsor Star*: "Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty, who said he favours deregulation and privatization, accused the Tories of being in it 'for a quick buck.'" Imagine accusing the Tories when they had the same policy.

February 5, 2001, on the *Larry Silver Show*, here's what Dalton said: "I mean, that's the whole idea behind this thing, is to bring in competition and to bring rates down."

February 5, 2001, on the same show, here's what Dalton said: "We believe you've got to go toward deregulation. That's the way to bring this thing to heel. That's the way to introduce real competition."

It wasn't just Dalton. Mr Conway, whom I had lots of time for as a long-serving member in this Legislature, had lots to say about hydro privatization and deregulation as well.

Here we are. January 10, 2002, in the *Kingston Whig-Standard*: "The government needed to open the electricity market and it certainly needed private investment in the generating industry, critic Conway said."

December 19, 2001, the *Toronto Star*: "Liberal MPP Sean Conway said while his party supports some level of competition in the generation of electricity for sale at market prices, he does not think Harris is being realistic when he predicts prices will not increase for consumers." Even Conway said that prices were going to increase for consumers under hydro privatization and deregulation.

Here's another one—this is *Hansard*, June 5, 2001; Sean was speaking in the House: "We believe we can have a reasonably competitive market in the generation of electricity."

Here's a final one—there are lots more, but I just wanted to give you a flavour of what Mr McGuinty and Mr Conway had to say. *Hansard*, May 2, 2001—this is



Mr Conway: "I repeat: the Harris government, to its credit, appointed a blue ribbon panel of smart people to give it advice about a serious problem. The core and the most fundamental recommendation these people made was that there should be a competitive marketplace for the generation of electricity."

There you go. There's just a flavour of what the Ontario Liberal Party had to say about hydro privatization and deregulation. What they had to say was the same as what the former Conservative government had to say, and in fact did. What was so interesting was that when the rate cap came in, the Liberals supported the rate cap.

It's worth pointing out that if hydro privatization and deregulation had really worked, then the rates would have gone down. Hydro consumers in this province would have been receiving bills that had decreasing costs to them. But it didn't work. If it had been working, let me repeat, there wouldn't have been any need for the government to intervene massively in the marketplace, because the rates would have been going down all on their own with competition.

But what happened starting last May? Starting last May when the market opened, and all through the fall, people started getting their hydro bills and calling all our offices, including Liberal MPPs' offices, and they were mad. They were mad because their hydro bills weren't going down, like Mr McGuinty and company promised, and Mr Harris and company promised, their rates were going up 200%, 300%, 400%, and they didn't know how they were going to pay their bills, especially seniors on fixed incomes.

I just want to give you a flavour of what some of the Liberals had to say about hydro privatization and deregulation after the cap came off. The Liberals were so busy running for cover last fall that every single one of them was on their feet talking about how terrible it was that hydro rates were going up.

Here's one from Mr Brown: "Let me tell you about the senior citizen on a fixed income in Wawa whose electrical bill has increased 60% year over year. Let me tell you about Les and Pauline Hillstrom, dairy farmers near Bruce Mines. Their hydro bill has gone from \$1,000 in August 2001 to an astonishing \$2,020 for August 2002. Let me tell you about the small dry cleaner on the Manitoulin whose monthly electrical bill has increased 300%. Let me tell you about the Goulais truck driver, with two small children and a wife who is disabled, whose electricity bill has doubled." Here's what he says: "It is time to stand up for Ontario consumers. Yesterday, Liberals called on the government to roll out the rebate."

Do you see what happened? The Liberals started running for cover. They were looking for any excuse possible to try to get a cap on those rates to get them down, because they didn't want to deal with irate constituents who were calling, saying, "My hydro rate didn't go down. It's going up and up, out of control, and I can't afford to pay." The Liberals didn't want to get caught by someone pointing out that their support of hydro privatization and deregulation was exactly the same as the Conservatives': They were in favour.

Then they decided to say the problem really was that deregulation and privatization had been mismanaged by the Conservative government, and if it hadn't been mismanaged by the Conservative government, rates would have gone down.

**2100**

Let me give you one from Ms Pupatello. Here we go: "Families across Ontario today are wondering how they are going to pay their hydro bills. Our offices are being flooded with phone calls, e-mails and letters from people who cannot believe how much the Harris-Eves government has bungled the hydro file." Not that the problem was hydro privatization and deregulation; no, the problem was that Conservatives had just somehow mismanaged the dossier.

Here's one from Mr Bryant. I like this one because it contrasts very clearly what this government hasn't done with respect to GST. Michael Bryant said the following: "The Harris-Eves government has bungled on hydro again, this time botching the hydro debt retirement charge and playing tax collector of the GST for a charge that deserves no tax at all.... Today, Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals repeat our demand that the province stop playing tax collector for the feds on the debt retirement charge. Cease and desist collecting the GST on the debt charge.... How badly have the Tories bungled hydro?"

Do you know what's interesting about this bill? Is this government doing anything about collecting the GST? No, they're not. Are they doing anything about dealing with the debt retirement charge and putting the GST on that? No, they aren't, because their position is the same as your position, Speaker. Exactly the same.

So much for trying to blame the Tories for mismanagement. The problem is the position is the same, and the problem is hydro privatization and deregulation isn't working.

Here's another one—

**Mr Marchese:** Who's that?

**Ms Martel:** Mr Levac. He's here tonight. I want to quote him. Here he is: "I rise in the House today to speak on the Harris-Eves government's continued mismanagement of Ontario electricity policy. From higher costs and bungled regulations to the lack of consumer education about the new system, there is no question that the Harris-Eves government has lost control of the hydro file.... The Liberal caucus has said from the beginning that the Harris-Eves government has completely botched the hydro file." It's not a question of "botched"; it's a question of hydro privatization and deregulation—did it work?

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** It's true.

**Ms Martel:** Look, Dave, October 31, 2002, here's what you had to say—

**Mr Marchese:** He said "mismanagement."

**Ms Martel:** Mismanagement. I don't know; it's hard to blame it on mismanagement. When you're trying to duck, when you're trying to run, when you're trying to tell your constituents, "It's not our fault," then, of course,



you blame the government in power for mismanagement. The point that I am making to you tonight as clearly as I can is that the problem had nothing to do with mismanagement; the problem is that hydro privatization and deregulation didn't work. You shouldn't have been supporting it, and the Conservatives should never have brought it in, and now you have a lot to answer for.

Here is Mr Sergio. He's here tonight. Here we go; let me see what he has to say: "I want to address my remarks directly to the Premier, because everyone saw it coming except the government." You're darned right everyone saw those high hydro rates coming. Why did you support hydro privatization and deregulation? They saw it coming in California, in Alberta, in Montana and, sure enough, it came in Ontario. But you guys were so busy supporting it that you didn't want to recognize that it hadn't worked anywhere else and it wasn't going to work here. And it didn't.

Let me see; I've got the member from Hamilton Mountain. Here she is: "Words cannot begin to convey the outrage over the hydro bills in my community." Same in mine. "What do we need to do to get the message through? Surely your constituents have told you, the media have told you and the Liberals are telling you. What more needs to be done before you give our constituents the rebate to help ease this pain?" Well, look, the rebate. OK, give us the rebate. Why don't you give us public power? Give us public power, because all the rebate does and all the rate cap does is hide high private power costs. It hides the mess. It doesn't fix the problem, it just hides the mess.

I just want to see if I have anybody else who is in here tonight. No, I don't. I'm sorry. I thought I had one from Mr Colle; I don't. Anyway, that was just a flavour. There were lots more because, as I say, last fall when hydro rates were going out of control, the Liberals were running for cover. They were looking for every excuse in the book to say that the real problem, of course, was not hydro privatization and deregulation; it was just mismanagement of the dossier by the former Conservative government.

Look, the Liberals supported the rate cap because they didn't want to take the heat on the failure of hydro privatization and deregulation. That's why they supported the rate cap. They didn't want it to be known that their policy was the same as the Conservatives' policy; and they didn't want to have to admit to their constituents that unless something was done to go back to public power, constituents, under a deregulated market, were going to continue to be gouged and gouged and gouged. Seniors on fixed incomes in so many of our communities weren't going to be able to pay their hydro bills, ODSP recipients in so many of our communities weren't going to be able to pay their hydro bills, people working on minimum wage in so many of our communities weren't going to be able to pay their hydro bills, and small businesses and dairy farmers—and the list goes on and on—weren't going to be able to pay their bills. The Liberals supported the rate cap not because their view,

their position, on hydro privatization and deregulation changed; they were just looking for cover to get away from angry constituents who wanted somebody to do something about high hydro bills.

The Liberals knew when they supported the rate cap that of course someone was going to have to pay those high hydro rates. If you have the rate cap in place, hydro ratepayers don't see what the real cost of power is. That's the beauty of the rate cap: You can try and fool them for a while; you can try to buy them off with their own money and hope that they don't start to recognize that if we're not back to public power, if we still have private power but the rate is capped, who is paying the difference between the capped rate on my bill and what it's really costing to produce private power in Ontario? Of course, we're paying all those profit-takers and fee-takers and commission-takers and everybody else who has their hand in the till and who's on the bill because of private power.

The Liberals knew when the rate cap went into effect that of course it wasn't going to be revenue-neutral. How could it be? Of course it wasn't going to be, and nobody believed the Tories when they said that, least of all the Liberals. Goodness, goodness, goodness. So it was no surprise. To say now, as the Liberals tried to do here tonight and as they've done through this debate, "Oh, my God, we've got to bring in a different bill. We can't afford this. We didn't know that it wasn't revenue-neutral"—for goodness' sake, whom are you trying to kid, people? Whom are you trying to kid? Of course we knew. That's the problem with private power.

We have a bill before us that continues on under the Liberals with the same Conservative policy of hydro privatization and deregulation. That's what we have before us. We have a bill that merely replaces the Conservative rate cap with a Liberal rate cap. But this does nothing to change the problem with the GST that Mr Bryant pointed out, and it does nothing to deal with hiding the real costs of private power, which is at the heart of the matter. We didn't vote for the rate cap in November; we're not going to support the rate cap now, because New Democrats believe that the bill we should be debating today is a bill to return Ontario to public power, where power is provided at cost by a non-profit utility.

We know that things aren't going to get any better. If hydro privatization and deregulation really worked, we wouldn't have had the problems that we saw in California; we wouldn't have had the problems that we saw in Alberta; we wouldn't have had the problems that we saw in Montana; and we wouldn't have had the problems that we saw last fall in Ontario. If deregulation and privatization really worked, then, when the market opened last May, hydro consumers—hospitals, schools, dairy farmers, industry big and small—would have seen their hydro rates declining, decreasing, being reduced.

That's not what happened, and everyone who was in this House last fall knows it. Exactly the opposite is true: When that market opened, prices went out of control.



People got bills that were 200%, 300%, 400% higher than before the market opened. People came screaming into their MPPs' offices and Liberals looked for cover. They looked for cover with their accomplices in the Conservative Party who weren't too happy taking the blame for the failure of hydro privatization and deregulation either.

Tonight we should be in this place not trying to substitute a Liberal rate cap for a Conservative rate cap, not trying to prop up failed hydro deregulation and privatization; we should be in this House this evening—we should have been in the House last November—dealing with a bill that brings public power back to Ontario, power provided at cost, power provided through a non-profit utility, power that is safe and reliable. Unfortunately, all we're going to do with this bill is prop up hydro privatization and deregulation one more time.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

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**Mr Levac:** I will give the member from Nickel Belt credit for the consistency of the message. Believability is in her words in terms of her belief about how the system should work. What I'd like to point out—if she wants to use my record in the House, she can also look up my record in the *Expositor*, my local newspaper, that indicated quite clearly that I had a concern even before any of the decisions were made regarding capping. The cap idea in itself, in terms of Toronto versus what the government decided to do, indicated—where did the 4.3 come from in the first place to find out what the true cost of electricity is? The people of Ontario have indicated to us that it's time we started to pay the true cost of what these issues are.

Ask yourself—farmers, in terms of food, get about 3 cents on the dollar in terms of the actual money that everybody else makes on agriculture. When do we want to start making sure we pay? I looked this up on the Internet and found out that in Italy they pay somewhere around \$3.50 for a bottle of olives. I'll tell you what happens.

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** What has the price of olives got to do with anything?

**Mr Levac:** If anybody wants to ask what I'm talking about, ask yourself in your heart whether or not we are paying for the value of what we're receiving in terms of our services—our health care, our transportation, our infrastructure, our water, and now, looking at this discussion, our power.

I had a meeting with our municipality. Before the previous government did what it did, it was going to make the municipalities pass resolutions that they themselves were going to have to sign off that, "We're taking responsibility for the problem." The government wasn't going to do that. They were going to make the municipalities that had the power, that kept the power in their hands, have a resolution that said, "If there are any problems or any mistakes, they're ours as a municipality." But they basically said, "We're not going to do that." It was going to cost my municipality \$1 million, going in

the hole, in order to do this program. So the reality is that we have to start paying for the value of what we're getting in terms of service.

**Mr O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Nickel Belt, but I just want to put some more information on the record for those still awake and listening. The select committee on Ontario Hydro nuclear affairs, and I just think it's important to put some of this—this is the executive summary of a report issued in August or September 1997. It says, "The utility announced that the board of directors has decided on a recovery strategy to temporarily lay up seven of its nuclear reactors in an effort to improve their performance. The cost of the recovery"—this is important—"would be in the range of \$5 billion to \$8 billion."

This was basically approved and went to this committee I'm referring to. I might say the member from Nickel Belt has done an admirable job, but the member then was Floyd Laughren. That committee approved that expenditure. Now we're talking about the recovery plan with some kind of—illustrating that we don't really understand it.

**Mr Hampton:** There was a dissent.

**Mr O'Toole:** There was a dissent. Probably Peter Kormos came in one afternoon to dissent.

I just think we should put in perspective here the importance of this issue of the complete reliance on nuclear. It's so technical that no one can challenge unless you're part of that corporate culture. I'm a great believer in finding new renewable, sustainable forms of power. That's where that other committee I referred to, the alternative fuels committee, did great work—again, a report of all three parties.

There was a bill this week that passed, the mega tax bill, the bill that the Liberals passed this week, a \$4-billion tax increase. There was one clause in there that I agreed with, and that was the ability to extend the retail sales tax reduction on energy-efficient appliances. I encourage you to do more of that kind of thing. You'll find a lot of support on this side of the House for making wise tax policy decisions. This idea of just taxing and whacking people is unacceptable. Like the seniors in my riding, people on ventilators in their homes; these kinds of people need to have—members should know that the average consumption per household is 1,000 kilowatt hours. Guess what? You cut it off at 750. They're going to pay more for electricity. Seniors on fixed incomes are never going to forgive you.

**Mr Marchese:** First of all, I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario watching this political forum. It's about 9:15. Just to remind you, our leader, Howard Hampton, is going to be speaking shortly, assuming the Liberals are not going to speak, but they might. But even so, please stay tuned. I'll be speaking after that. Gilles Bisson will be speaking after that. So there's a lot more lively debate coming.

Second, I want to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt on a marvellous speech. I just enjoy when Shelley Martel excoriates the Liberals in the way that she



does: incisive, strong speech against what the Liberals did and said so many times so many years ago. Shelley, I loved the Sean Conway letter there, the \$300 fundraiser. I was surprised they didn't have a \$700 fundraising event to invite the hydro people, saying, "We're happy to deregulate the hydro market. Please come. We're part of it. We want you to be part of it. Come and give us a couple of hundred bucks and share in the joy of that event." It was a beautiful little letter, with all due respect to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I think it was; yes.

The other reminder: about how the Liberals supported the sell-off of Hydro One, supported the ongoing sell-off of the generation of power because they loved what the Tories were doing. They were in collaboration and in concert with each other then, until the court case, when the court ruled that Hydro One could not be sold. Then, lo and behold, the Liberals said, "Oh, we're on the wrong side of this issue, so now we are opposed to the sell-off of Hydro One."

Then there's your reminder about the rate cap. When they supported the rate cap, it was because, lo and behold, before the election you can't go out to the electorate and say, "We're going to remove the rate cap." But no sooner did they get elected than they said, "Ah, the rate cap is bad. We're losing millions and millions of dollars. We've got to be responsible and bring it back." So much for the Liberals, eh?

**Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East):** Many of us watched with great delight the Grey Cup football game, a great tradition. Football is a terrific game, and I enjoyed watching this season as it took place. It's over, but the official opposition and the third party want to use energy as a political football. People don't want to be toyed with, flipped and flopped around; they got that for the last 13 years. For the last 13 years they got flipped and flopped around. The days of using a political football are over. The captain of the official opposition, Ernie Eves, flipped and flopped 11 times on hydro, finally imposing a cap of 4.3 cents. Since those Tory prices came into effect, it has cost Ontarians \$800 million. The 4.3-cent freeze was simply unrealistic. Ultimately our taxpayers—you, me, everybody watching today, all of Ontario—have paid out \$800 million for this mismanagement and misrepresentation. Do the right and responsible thing. That's what we're doing.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Mississauga East, just withdraw that comment.

**Mr Fonseca:** Yes, withdrawn.

The NDP also flipped and flopped too many times on this issue. Mr Hampton wanted the cap, then he didn't want it, now he wants it again. I don't know if he knows what he wants.

Our plan would take the politics and politicians out of electricity pricing and give that responsibility to an independent regulator. The Ontario Energy Board has been directed to assume the responsibility as soon as possible and no later than May 2005. This is the responsible thing to do.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response from the member for Nickel Belt.

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**Ms Martel:** I want to thank those members who participated. With my two-minute response, let me say a couple of things.

The member for Brant said that people in his riding think it's time to pay the true cost of what things are. Look, the problem is that private power does not reflect the true cost; it reflects the price when all the fee-takers, commission-takers and everybody else who wants to get their hands into your pocket is getting their hands into your pocket and gouging ratepayers for all they are worth. That is the problem with private power. It has been far more expensive than power at cost. The evidence of that goes back to when the market was open. Hydro rates did not decrease; they went through the roof. I don't want to pay the price of private power. I believe Ontarians should be paying for power at cost, and that requires us to abandon the failed scheme of privatization and deregulation, supported and brought in by the Conservatives, now propped up by the Liberals. That's what we should be doing.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Martel:** We have never supported the rate caps. How many times did I say that tonight? We haven't supported the rate caps. Last November we were in opposition, and we're going to oppose the rate caps tonight, because we recognize that the rate caps only hide the mess. That was the problem with it: It hides the failure of hydro privatization and deregulation.

I guess some of you hoped, when you supported it last November, that if rates went down on hydro bills because of the rate cap, people wouldn't start asking the questions, "Who is paying for the real cost of power? Who is subsidizing those private energy companies that are gouging us with their electricity rates?" Hydro is an essential service. We need it every day. We need it absolutely every day. We should get the fee-takers and the profit-takers and the commission-takers out of the energy sector. We need public power in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Delaney:** After all the heat, perhaps we can talk about something with a little light. Electricity is something we take for granted. In August, we saw what happened when our electricity grid failed. It was hot, and it was also quiet. In a brief and nostalgic way, Ontarians made the best of a crisis. We all pitched in, and we all got through it.

But 2003 is not 1903 or even 1953. Electricity is a must-have in today's homes, in today's businesses and in today's public services. Electricity is a utility, just like water, gas, telephone service and, more recently, data communication services.

If we need electricity, then the means by which we obtain it must be fair, economical, reliable and accountable. Until this government was elected nine weeks ago, our electricity supply system was a train wreck in slow motion. It took decades for Ontario to slip to the brink of



Third World status, and it will probably take time for Ontarians to have a truly modern transmission grid and a modern, reliable, economical power generation system.

Ontario has built no new base generation electrical capacity for nearly two decades. The last major base-load generation station, at Darlington on Lake Ontario, was subject to wild cost overruns caused not so much by design or construction faults, because the technology and the techniques used at Darlington were both mature and proven at the time, but mostly by political waffling by the government of the day, retroactive design changes and successive construction contract stretching.

After Darlington, nothing—nothing at all. In the interim, our society came to use electricity more and more intensively. Into our homes came microwave ovens, personal computers and countless other appliances that all needed a wall plug to work. We used more electricity per capita. After Darlington also came both a wave of immigration from abroad and the coming of age of the baby boomers, driving Ontario's population upward by more than two million people.

On matters of fiscal responsibility, the past government has been shown to have adopted the NATO approach, which means, "No action, talk only." They've used the NATO approach on health care, education, social services and the economy.

As Premier, the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey flip-flopped 11 times on hydro privatization. He finally chose the one solution that satisfied nobody. It both discouraged intelligent conservation and took away any incentive to build generating capacity.

The previous government froze hydro rates at a price below the cost of production. They continued to add to the debt load of Ontarians while government-paid partisan advertising extolled the wisdom of a choice now seen to be folly. Indeed, they should be excoriated for it. The previous government froze hydro rates at a price far below the cost of production. Ontarians saw their debt load go up.

The 4.3-cent price freeze was simply unrealistic. Ontario taxpayers are stuck for an additional \$800 million in debt because of a decision made without any shred of a framework of a plan.

The province of Ontario and its taxpayers cannot continue to subsidize inefficient users of energy. The people of Ontario need stable finances, schools that work and health care that responds to our needs.

So the government of Ontario has done something about it.

We've rolled up our sleeves. We plan to take politics and politicians out of electricity pricing. We plan to transfer that responsibility to an independent regulator. The Ontario Energy Board will assume this responsibility no later than May 2005, and sooner if it can be arranged.

In the meantime, we need to stop the bleeding of taxpayers' money into the pockets of the least efficient energy users of Ontario.

The current 4.3-cent-per-kilowatt-hour price cap will be removed as of April 1, 2004. This means that those most at risk will face no change during the winter cold

weather. This is the responsible and the humane way to manage this transition.

Starting April 1, 2004, the first 750 kilowatt hours of energy consumed in any one month will be priced at 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour and the balance above that charged at 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour.

With the array of other charges faced by consumers, the average household bill will not rise by much. For a household consuming 750 kilowatt hours, that difference will be about \$3 a month. For a household consuming 1,000 kilowatt hours in a month, that will be an additional \$3. And for Ontarians, the debt will stop rising. The time between now and April 1 will enable consumers to take a realistic assessment of their energy consumption patterns, and perhaps even save money through insulation, through energy-efficient appliances and through better technology. Perhaps consumers will use more efficient lighting.

Government will do its part as well. We will improve our own energy usage efficiency. In the coming weeks, the Chair of Management Board will announce specific new measures in this regard.

The Minister of Finance will extend the current provincial sales tax rebate to encourage and support energy efficiency and conservation.

Ontario will need conservation measures as a bridge between the precarious balance we now have between energy supply and demand and where we must be in 10 years, when we plan to have safe, clean, affordable electricity supply and a modernized and secure transmission and distribution grid.

Ontario will also expand its efforts to educate consumers about steps they can take to conserve energy, to use other forms of energy, and in so doing, to help stretch our energy supplies even as they lower their monthly bills.

What a contrast from the former government. The member for Simcoe-Grey, when he was energy minister, told the *Globe and Mail Report on Business*, "The private sector asked us to get out of large-scale government conservation programs that may have made the odd person feel good, but they had absolutely no effect."

It is this type of attitude that saw privatization of electricity fail again and again. But failure means nothing if you've got the privatization religion. In fact, failure probably means you haven't tried hard enough or often enough, if you're a true believer. This logic is identical to beating your head against a brick wall simply because it feels so good when you stop.

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While the former Ontario Hydro, which had the advantage of many fine engineers and technicians and also the economies of scale of having been one of the world's premier electrical utilities, should have been capably managed and run, the previous government rewarded its party loyalists with cozy contracts and empty positions at Hydro One. While top management fiddled, Hydro had to take 4,600 megawatts of generating capacity offline after the massive problems at Pickering.



Successive provincial governments, dating back to the 1970s, have failed to build any redundancy into Ontario's generating capacity, leaving Ontarians one failure or one botched management project from either enormous costs, as we buy base power at peak power—spot market rates—or facing blackouts. We saw the first of those blackouts this past summer.

The reliable and affordable supply of electricity is a long-term and multifaceted set of issues. This bill is a necessary first step. It stops the bleeding of money from Ontario's working families into a sinkhole of debt.

Our present situation need not have been so. Ontario was a net exporter of electricity into the 1990s. Exporting electricity to the United States allowed Ontarians to recover the capital costs of generating capacity through the healthy profits paid to us by purchasing utilities in the United States.

Our present situation, however, seems to have been preordained more than a generation ago. In the late 1970s, the former government of Bill Davis commissioned a Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning. It reported in 1979. That royal commission looked as far ahead as the turn of the century, an event we can now look back upon.

It is instructive to look at that report today with 20-20 hindsight, and recently I did so. That royal commission studied the technology of the day intensively, but it did only a superficial job on what factors might drive demand. Failure to recognize the technological innovations of the 1980s and 1990s can be forgiven, but failure to factor in an immigration-driven population growth and the growth in relative prosperity within Ontario was a grievous error. Those trends, both demographic and economic, were clearly visible then. The royal commission gave the government of the day an excuse to prevaricate, an option it seized with gusto, and they resolutely did nothing.

Nothing is not an option for Ontario. Nothing is not the philosophy of this government. This government's naysayers will simply have to castigate us for what we have done rather than what we postpone doing. This government has a Minister of Energy with the vision to know where Ontario needs to go, the courage to lay out a concrete plan for a secure energy future for Ontario and the integrity to dedicate himself to getting the job done at long last.

Bill 4 is by no means the be-all and end-all, but if I may quote Winston Churchill after the British victory at El Alamein in 1942, "This is not the end. This is not even the beginning of the end. But it is the end of the beginning."

That's why we've put forward Bill 4, and that's why I'm asking for its support.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Questions and comments? The member for Simcoe-Grey.

**Mr Dunlop:** Simcoe North—I just want to correct you.

It's a pleasure to rise this evening to take part in this debate. I think I've said this a number of times in the

House about the particular issue of electricity and hydro in the province of Ontario. On one hand, I commend the Minister of Energy for his efforts in trying to deal with this, just as I commended Minister Baird when he was the Minister of Energy, and I commended Minister Wilson and the people who tried to actually deal with correcting the very, very difficult and complex system we have here in the province of Ontario.

As you go around the room and listen to the debate from the members, particularly the members from the NDP, who believe completely in a public system, I can't go along with that. I think we're going to need private sector investment, particularly in generation, in the province of Ontario, and we're obviously going to have to look at alternatives.

Alternative energy sources are probably the most important direction that any government can go in. I hope we can do that, because at the end of the day, with our growing economy, with our growing population and with a growing industrial base, we need a good source of electricity, not only for our generation but for many, many decades down the road. I hope that in the end this legislation will work. I'm disappointed in removing the cap, because I thought we weren't going in that direction, but at the same time it's important that we consider alternatives in the future.

**Mr Marchese:** I want the member from Mississauga West not to forget what his leader said prior to the election, and I encourage you to ruminate on the following:

Dalton McGuinty—Ottawa Citizen, November 15, 2002—speaking of the rate cap, says, "This is a quick fix, a transparent attempt to buy votes, to buy favour with our own money." You understand this.

Contrast that to the following—Friday, September 19, 2003, in the heat of the election campaign, your leader: "It will take time to rebuild our hydro system, so we will keep electricity rates where they are until 2006." You understand the point I'm making, member for Mississauga West? Your leader said the rate cap imposed by the Tories was a cynical canard. Following that, your leader then says, "But it will take time to rebuild the system; therefore, we will keep the rate cap until 2006."

You understand what I'm trying to get at, I hope, as a number of you Liberals stand up, each and every one of you, to say "Ha, how often the Tories have flip-flopped." And speaking in reference to the NDP, it's always been in favour of public power, and you say to us that we flip-flopped? I want you to ponder as best as you can the matters that I have raised as they relate to your leader and others we have quoted for your pleasure. So, if you have the time, respond to this as best as you can.

**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** I want to commend my friend on the fact that he talked about the seriousness and the importance of our government in promoting a safe, reliable and sustainable supply of energy.

I want to talk about the fact that for some of us the blackout that happened in August was an inconvenience. I had to walk down 34 flights of stairs in the dark. For



many businesses in Ontario it was very serious. They lost food, they lost production time. They were asked not to run their equipment for several days. But to many other people in our community it was much more than an inconvenience. It wasn't that they didn't have air conditioning and didn't have lights and didn't have elevators; they didn't have ability to protect their food supply.

That very week I was at an event at the Daily Bread Food Bank, and spoke to families who lost their supply of medication, who lost their supply of food and later that week were at the Daily Bread Food Bank because they simply didn't have the ability to replenish the food in their fridge. I talked to mothers whose children had been hungry that week because they didn't have ability to replenish the food in their fridge.

It is serious. The need for us to have a sustainable supply of electricity is also one that we must consider when we think about the young man who lost his life. Sadly and tragically, he was in his apartment unable to use the oxygen, unable to use the air conditioning, trapped in his apartment.

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So when we talk about whether or not a sustainable supply of energy is needed, let's not think about air conditioning, let's not think about lights and elevators. Let's think about the real people who suffered real hardship as a result of the blackout in September, which for most of us was simply an inconvenience. A real sustainable supply, safe and reliable, is much more than a convenience; it's a necessity

**Mr Hampton:** I listened intently, carefully, to the member for Mississauga West, just as I listened to him about a week ago on this same issue. I have to tell him again tonight that he's delivering the same speech that the former member for Mississauga West delivered on this issue, but the former member for Mississauga West was a Conservative.

It is becoming more and more clear, I believe, to everyone that the only difference between the Conservative policy on hydroelectricity, which policy was privatization and deregulation, and the Liberal policy on hydroelectricity, which continues to be privatization and deregulation, is that the Liberals are now going to substitute their phony rate cap for the Conservative's phony rate cap. The Conservative rate cap, which you all unanimously supported, did one thing: it tried to hide the very high cost of privatized, deregulated electricity from people during the election campaign.

What is your rate cap going to do? It's going to do the same thing. It's going to attempt to hide from the consumers of Ontario the high cost of privatized, deregulated hydroelectricity.

What we should be debating here tonight would be a bill to get the profit-takers, the fee-takers, the commission-takers off the hydro bill. We should be debating a bill to close the hydro market to ensure that hydroelectricity is provided at cost, so that it is affordable for people.

**The Speaker:** The member for Mississauga West has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Delaney:** I thank the members for their comments. I thank the member for Simcoe North. I agree that we need a good and secure source of electricity for our future. I hope that both the member and I can look back on the decisions taken now and agree that they worked.

I also thank the member for Trinity-Spadina. I believe people will ask us years hence not if we tried to perpetuate the unsustainable but if we had the vision to see Ontario's future and the courage to get us there.

I thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. She and I are on the same page with electricity being the necessary utility that it is.

I especially thank my colleague for Kenora-Rainy River. In fact, I believe the member knows the former member for Mississauga West far better than I do. I believe also that the former member for Mississauga West has left his former residence in Oklahoma and might be looking for a new farm. Perhaps the former member for Mississauga West may end up as a constituent of the present member for Kenora-Rainy River, and I wish the member success should that happen.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Hampton:** I listened intently to the comments that have been made. I want to get right to the heart of the issue and take people back to 1998, when the Conservatives brought in their electricity competition act. The Conservatives said at the time that deregulating and privatizing our hydroelectricity system would reduce the price, they said it would bring on new supply, they said it would clean our air and that it would provide us with a reliable, affordable supply of electricity for the future.

I want to remind all the Liberals here tonight that each and every one of the Liberals who were in the Legislature then voted with the Conservatives; that is, you said that you were all in favour of privatization and deregulation of our hydroelectricity system, because you said—and we've heard lots of quotes of your leader, now the Premier, who said, "It will make hydroelectricity more affordable, it'll bring on new supply, it'll clean the air, it's the way to go." I want hydro consumers across the province now to reflect where we are at the end of 2003, almost five years later. I invite you to take out your hydro bill from 1999 or 2000 and compare it to your hydro bill now. What you'll find is that the hydro bill has almost doubled.

So the first thing the Liberals and Conservatives said, that it would lead to more affordable electricity, has certainly been proved false. Electricity is not more affordable; the hydro bill is almost double. And when the Liberal rate cap is substituted for the Conservative rate cap, the hydro bill will certainly have doubled.

Did it bring on new supply? Well, apparently not. One of the things the Liberals are talking about here is that they believe they have to increase the price of electricity because they too hope to bring on new supply. We haven't had any new supply.

Did it clean our air? No, it didn't. The Ontario Medical Association, along with a number of international bodies, points out that in fact the air is getting dirtier. It



hasn't substituted anything for the dirty coal. If anything, the dirty coal generators are operating more in Ontario today than ever. In fact, to make up for the lack of supply, we're importing more electricity from the United States, most of which is provided by dirty coal-generating stations. It hasn't worked on that front either. The air is dirtier than ever.

What else has happened? What else has happened is this: The lights went out. In August of this year, the lights went out, a blackout that extended across all of southern Ontario and at least half of northern Ontario.

So virtually everything that Conservatives and Liberals were saying in terms of what should be done about our hydroelectricity supply has been proven to be patently false—not on one front, not on two fronts, not on three fronts, but on four fronts. It costs more, it hasn't delivered new supply, the air is dirtier than ever and the lights went out.

In that context, what we should be debating here tonight is a bill that says, "We recognize that hydro privatization and deregulation hasn't worked, and looking at what happened in California and Alberta and Montana and Pennsylvania and New Zealand and Great Britain, it's not likely to work. Therefore, we're going to remove all the profit-takers from the hydroelectricity system, and the commission-takers and the fee-takers and the speculators like Direct Energy. We're going to get rid of them. We're going to move to a public, not-for-profit system that provides hydroelectricity at cost and where the government of the day has the capacity to directly move toward greater use of wind and small-scale hydroelectricity, has the capacity to move directly into energy efficiency and energy conservation, and has the capacity to work for more industrial cogeneration."

Is that the bill we're debating? No. There is no effort here on the part of this government to close the private, deregulated hydro market, which hasn't cleaned up the air, which has given us a blackout, which hasn't brought on new supply but has certainly driven up the price.

The Liberal policy on hydroelectricity remains exactly as the Conservative policy on hydro deregulation and privatization. We saw from the Conservatives a phony rate cap that didn't take the speculators off the hydro bill, didn't take the fee-takers off the hydro bill, didn't take the commission-takers or the profit-takers off the hydro bill; it simply temporarily tried to hide how exorbitantly expensive private hydro was during the election campaign. We saw the Liberals, each and every one of them, support that phony rate cap before the election campaign and during the election campaign. Then, what do they do as soon as the election campaign is over? They get rid of it. But did they do anything about the profit-takers, the fee-takers, the commission-takers and the speculators who are driving up the hydro bill, putting seniors on fixed incomes into desperate straits, hurting small business? No, they don't do any of those things, none of those things.

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I just want to refer to some of the other issues that have been under discussion here somewhat. I can

remember, and I've referred to this before, going back with the Conservative Ministers of Energy—Norm Sterling, Jim Wilson, Chris Stockwell, John Baird. They all said that in a private hydro market, if you just let the price of hydro electricity go higher and higher, then it would bring in new supply. Did it work? The hydro bill certainly went higher and higher, but we haven't seen any new supply.

What did I hear the current Minister of Energy say here tonight? He said that if they moved the price of hydro now to 4.7 cents a kilowatt hour and 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour, it would bring on new supply. He's saying the same things that the Conservative energy ministers Norm Sterling, Jim Wilson, Chris Stockwell, John Baird said. Do you know what? It didn't work for them and it's not going to work for you. Those companies will do exactly in Ontario what they've done in California, in Alberta, in Montana.

I was in Alberta last month at an energy conference, and part of what we got to see or hear was a videotape of Ralph Klein. I swear I heard Ralph Klein in the person of Dwight Duncan here tonight, in a slightly different voice, but saying the same things. If you let the price of hydro go higher, they say, it will bring in new supply. Except, do you know what's going on in Alberta? They've had to announce that they're going to finesse deregulation there. They're going to put a three-month slowing down process on it. Do you know why? Because despite the fact that the price has gone higher and higher, there's no new supply. Consumers are looking for the benefit of paying much more on their hydro bill in Alberta, and they can't find it.

Yet what do we hear from this Liberal government? They're going to go down the road of Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and Ralph Klein, except they're going to try to convince people that they're somehow different. They're going to try to convince people that a rate cap with a blue ribbon on it is different from a rate cap with a red ribbon on it, despite the fact that hydro privatization and deregulation continue under the surface. It's not going to work.

There's something else that I find interesting, and people across Ontario very much need to reflect on it. I heard the Liberal leader and the energy minister say on a number of occasions that natural gas is the way to go, that you close the coal-fired stations and you create natural gas. Well, consumers across Ontario better understand that natural gas generating stations are relatively cheap and easy to build. When I say relatively cheap, you might be able to build one for \$500 million, you might be able to build one for \$1 billion, and that's relatively cheap compared to having to build a large hydro dam and generating station or having to build a nuclear station or coal-fired station. They're relatively cheap and easy to build, but anyone who looks at the price of natural gas now and the future prices of natural gas cannot help but come to the conclusion that, because of the very high price and the likely even higher price of natural gas in the future, a government that advocates going down the



natural gas route is literally going to drive the hydro bill even higher, much higher. Yet that is one of the solutions the Liberals are talking about.

Earlier this week, I asked both the Premier and the Minister of Energy to rule out going further down the nuclear road, because our experience with nuclear has not been very good. In fact, the experience with nuclear anywhere is not very good. In Britain, the British government is having to bail out British Energy, the company that owns the nuclear stations there, to the tune of about a \$2.5-billion loan in Canadian funds. That's a lot of money. That's a big bailout. That's a private sector company that's supposed to be operating on its own. In the United States, most of the nuclear stations have had to have some kind of public subsidy to keep them going.

Occasionally you will hear some of the nuclear proponents say, "Oh, there are these new nuclear plants that are being built in Korea, India and China, and they're very affordable." Except, do you know what? The World Bank, which has gotten Third World countries into some real financial jams, refuses to touch the construction of those nuclear plants; absolutely refuses to finance them. Do you know why? They cost too much money; they are not financially sustainable.

Our own history here in Ontario: Every nuclear plant that has been built in Ontario, whether Pickering A, Pickering B, Bruce A, Bruce B or Darlington, has gone over budget on construction costs, not by a few dollars but by hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars. Darlington was supposed to cost \$3.7 billion; it ended up costing over \$14 billion—an \$11-billion cost overrun.

That's one of the reasons why I've been hoping that Monte Kwinter would get up and speak to this issue, because I know Monte was in the Liberal cabinet of David Peterson from 1985 to 1990, when that cabinet struggled at almost weekly cabinet meetings with, "What do we do about that problem, Darlington?" That's when the cost went—and Mr Kwinter would know this—from about \$6 billion in 1985 to \$14 billion in 1990 when construction was completed.

**Mr Marchese:** They claim we did it.

**Mr Hampton:** No, what happened is that under the rules that then existed, you could not add the cost of a new facility, a new plant, into the hydro rate until it was finally constructed and came on-line. So the \$9 billion that the Liberals spent completing Darlington—\$9 billion that was all over budget—couldn't be added into the hydro rate until the fall of 1990 and 1991-92. That's one of the problems we struggled with. The plant is completed in 1990, it comes on-line between 1990 and into 1992, it's added into the hydro rate, and so hydro rates start going through the roof. That's why we finally said we're not going to do any more nuclear.

I've asked this government this question a couple of times now at a couple of different locations: Are you going to go further down the nuclear road? They don't want to answer. I suspect what that means is that they are going to go down the nuclear road even further. Even with the almost \$11-billion cost overrun at Darlington,

even with the fiasco that has happened at Pickering, even with the \$1-billion subsidy that Ontario taxpayers have effectively handed the Bruce nuclear station—and the Provincial Auditor revealed that when he looked at it about a year and a half ago—even with that experience, that very expensive experience with nuclear, it looks as if this government is going to continue to go there.

I've tried to outline, the last time we debated this bill and on other occasions, the need for energy efficiency, the need for a thorough, province-wide energy efficiency strategy, the kind of energy efficiency strategy that had been developed under Ontario Hydro during 1991, 1992 and 1993, when Hydro officials came before the legislative committees in 1993 and explained what it was. By the way, the Liberal energy critic at that time—I think his name was Dalton McGuinty—said he was opposed to that energy efficiency. He said it would be too expensive.

**2200**

I have tried to point out that that energy efficiency strategy would probably allow us to reduce our electricity consumption in this province by about 5,000 megawatts. It would take us a few years to get there, but we would be able to reduce our consumption, our demand. In fact, reducing our consumption by about that amount would be about what we would need to escape the threat of blackouts and brownouts in the hot summers and the very cold winters. But what did the Minister of Energy say when he spoke to the Toronto Board of Trade just a week ago? He said he didn't really think an energy efficiency strategy was worth pursuing.

I remember another Minister of Energy who said that. His name was Jim Wilson. He was the Conservative Minister of Energy, only Jim was more forthcoming. Mr Wilson said that once the decision to privatize and deregulate had been made, all of the energy efficiency strategies that were then either being put in place or were on the drawing board were thrown out. Why? He was very direct. He said it was because the Enrons and the Brascans and all the other private, profit-driven energy producers aren't interested in energy efficiency strategies. Why aren't they interested? They're not interested because they want to sell more energy and they want to sell it at a higher price so they can make more money. They're not interested in anyone coming around from the Ministry of Energy or from any other ministry saying, "Here's how you can use less electricity. Here's how you can buy a new, energy-efficient fridge and substitute it for the old one that uses too much electricity, and lower your electricity usage and your hydro bill." They're not interested in that.

As I listen to this Minister of Energy and this Premier, it looks as if they are headed down the same road as the Conservatives. They don't want to focus on energy efficiency, even though in their spin they say there is some conservation measure in this bill. I've read the bill carefully. I don't find any reference to energy efficiency and I don't find any conservation measures, other than that they want to drive up the price and keep driving up the price. Then, I suppose, there will be some seniors in



the province who won't be able to pay their hydro bill. I guess that's what they call conservation: people freezing in the dark or not being able to turn on the air conditioner when it's intolerably hot and humid in the summer.

There is no conservation strategy here and there's no energy efficiency strategy. What there is is the same electricity policy that was being pushed by the Conservatives, only now, instead of having Conservative spin, we have Liberal spin. I admit, the Liberal spin is a bit different from the Conservative spin, but at the end of the day, when you move past the spin, it's essentially the same thing.

I say this quite earnestly to all the people across Ontario: Just as we've experienced over the last four years, it's not going to reduce electricity prices; it's going to drive electricity prices up and your hydro bill will skyrocket. It will not bring on new supply, just as it hasn't brought on new supply. It will not clean the air, just as it hasn't cleaned the air. And we'll continue to be at risk of the lights going out.

That's why I'll be voting against this bill. This bill is virtually the same as the bills that were presented in this House by the Conservatives.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Hampton:** I want to hear about Darlington.

**Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services):** I'm going to tell you about Darlington, but first of all I want to tell you, as the member for Durham mentioned, I had the honour of being the Vice-Chair of the select committee looking into Hydro's nuclear problems. We found out at the time that there was a cultural problem at Hydro. They felt they had all of the answers. When we asked why they didn't reach out to get other people's ideas on it, their attitude was, "We don't ask people; people ask us. That's what we do."

The problem we have is that you have to deal with the situation as you find it. The leader of the New Democratic Party has specifically targeted Darlington. I should tell you that when we assumed the government in 1985, we were painfully aware of the problems at Darlington and the overruns. It was a horrible burden, not unlike the burden we're facing right now. The big problem is that when we did a cost analysis, we found we had two alternatives: shut it down and have all the money that was invested go down the drain, or finish it.

The problem was, it cost as much to shut it down as it did to finish it. So the prudent decision was, if you shut it down, you have nothing; if you finish it, you have this huge cost, which you're going to incur anyway, but at least you've got the ability to generate power. That is what in fact triggered that decision. It was sort of like, "Hold your nose and do it," because the options were just unpalatable. You would be wasting this incredible amount of money and you'd have nothing to show for it. So what we had to do was finish it and at least hope that we were going to get some benefit from this investment by the people of Ontario.

**Mr O'Toole:** I do believe it's worth paying some attention to the member from Kenora-Rainy River. As I

was watching the remarks, I had to reason that he—and I appreciate Mr Kwinter responding as honestly as he has, because he knows full well, as we've tried to outline here today, that you have to look to the history before you take any great steps forward. It's clear again, as you look at the operating reports I referred to earlier, that the NDP inherited this great operating debt load in 1993 and they froze the rates. That's all part of history, and people should know it. We've still been struggling with it. We tried to find an exit strategy and an all-party committee was formed to do that, but I think it's important in telling.

I don't often read the Star, even though it's free. Most of the time it's quite biased, in my view, and perhaps my reading is quite biased as well. Mr Epp and others go on to say—and I'm quoting from the Toronto Star of Friday, December 5, reasonably current, in response to the Epp report—"It is my view that there are people in management who accepted sliding deadlines, accepted excuses ... it's that type of culture which does not take responsibility and which is not accountable for...." In fact, even in the article on another page, "Nuclear Problem Clear Long Ago"—this is Friday, December 5, the Toronto Star as well—it does give some credit to the operating people, to Mr Osborne. He tried to resign a year earlier. In fact, all of them knew that it was almost a turnaround difficulty because of the culture, and they cite it again: "By the time the pros had left with their pockets full, the pattern of cultural dysfunction had been joined by a pattern of inadequate, unrealistic and unreliable costs and progressive failures in reporting systems." Clearly, if you look at the evidence, there's a culture of dysfunction there. It has been stated here; it's not just my view. There have been select committees. There has been all kinds of testimony that I think the people of Ontario should be apprised of.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Marchese:** Just to remind the folks watching that Gilles Bisson from Timmins-James Bay will be speaking for us next, and I'll be speaking after him, unless of course we can encourage some Liberal to stand up and speak, which—

**Mr Colle:** I'm next. Mention I'm next.

**Mr Marchese:** Michael Colle is next.

I've got to tell you this: As our leader was speaking, my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence said, with respect to the rate cap, that you wanted to keep it there because you wanted to help the seniors. I'm not sure what happened between a month and a half or two ago, where you wanted to help the seniors with the rate cap, and now, where the rate cap has been slightly increased, but they will be paying more. I'm not quite sure how you are going to help the citizens of Ontario. I'm happy to hear that my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence will take the 20 minutes. Beautiful. I'm looking forward to hearing him. Wonderful.

Second, I wanted to thank our leader of the New Democratic Party, Howard Hampton, for a very thoughtful, rational, intelligent defence of public power. This is a book called *Public Power: The Fight for Publicly Owned Electricity*, written by Howard Hampton.



**Mrs Munro:** Is that at Chapters?

**Mr Marchese:** I get it at my local bookstore, Book City, on Bloor just east of Bathurst Street. You have to defend and protect the little bookstore on the street in your local neighbourhood. Don't go to the big chains; defend the local stores. This book is available in all the bookstores. Those of you watching realize that Howard Hampton made a strong case for public power. We've been consistent from the very beginning, and we, the rest of us, will speak about the inconsistencies of the Liberal Party, because I think people want to know that. Please buy the book. Enjoy it; it's good reading—Public Power.

**Mr Colle:** I just wanted to comment on the presentation from the member for Kenora-Rainy River. I think the obvious thing is that what's forgotten in all this is that ultimately it comes down to the hydro bill that you get in the mail. Everybody talks about Darlington and they talk about defending Mr Osborne, as my friend from Durham did. The thing is, we on this side are trying to defend the person who has to pay the bill. That is what this is all about.

In this book there isn't any reference to the person having to pay their hydro bill. All they talk about is finger pointing, the legacy of mistakes. They try to defend each other's past commitments. The NDP was in power, just as the Conservatives were in power, and they made a mess of things. We're trying to say that this mess has to be fixed.

This bill is an attempt to come clean with the people of Ontario and say, "We're not here to defend Mr Osborne. We're not here to defend Eleanor Clitheroe. We're not here to defend ideology. We're here to defend Mr and Mrs Panucci, who have to pay the hydro bill. That's who we care about."

At what point will the two parties on the other side ever think of Mr and Mrs Panucci and the difficulty they have with their hydro bill? That's what we have to get to; then you're on the right track for a change.

**The Speaker:** The member for Kenora has two minutes.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to first of all thank the minister from York Centre for his comments, because I think Liberals most of all need to hear about the kind of week-by-week wrestling that went on over what to do with Darlington, and the eventual decision to complete it, even though that resulted in an \$11-billion cost overrun. I think this is what people across Ontario need to consider. In view of the fact that virtually every one of the nuclear stations came in over budget in terms of their construction costs, that one almost \$11 billion over budget, and in view of the fact that we now know nuclear stations cost hundreds of millions of dollars a year to maintain—and from Pickering and Bruce A we know now that they cost in the billions of dollars to try to refurbish, I think there's a lesson here for all of us: Nuclear power is far more expensive than was ever advertised. I think the World Bank has it right: It is far too expensive. That's why the World Bank refuses to build or finance nuclear stations in the Third World countries where they're being built now.

I just want to say further—and I say this to the Conservative members—you really should also read the 1995 annual report of Ontario Hydro—it was signed by Bill Farlinger, the golfing buddy of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. He looks at the hydro operations for that year and says, "We made money this year. In fact, we made enough money to pay our debt down by \$2.4 billion." He says, "Going forward, if we continue with the measures that have been put in place, we'll pay more of our debt down and we'll be sustainable operationally." Slightly after that they decided to privatize the whole thing and it started going off the rails again.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Colle:** It is, I think, very important for all members of the House to attempt to explain the critical point we're at in the history of this province. I think it's a very crucial point because of the fact there is so much at stake here. It's not only the provision of power that is essential for economic activity, for ordinary people trying to live in their homes and small business, but it's also critically important because of the impact it has on the finances of this province.

If you look at the sad recent history of Ontario Hydro as we've known it, there has been, obviously, a lack of connection between the managers or the operators of Ontario Hydro and its offspring, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One, and the people of Ontario and, in fact, the government of Ontario. There has been a disconnect. I think for too long those of us in public office of all parties have allowed this gap to widen between the people of Ontario and their power generator, Ontario Hydro or, as we know it, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. Because of this disconnect, we are at a point in our history where essentially we are without generation.

We saw this summer what happened, how close we were when we had a situation that occurred in the United States, in Ohio, that affected us with our blackout here. We know how precarious and how fragile our energy sources are. I think in the past we thought this was an unlimited resource we had that we could basically count upon indefinitely. We know that is not the case, that it is time for us as legislators, as elected officials, to do some bold things for the good of the people of Ontario.

That is why I am very happy to support the energy minister, Mr Dwight Duncan, for bringing Ontario Power Generation back under the control of the government, because it is certainly proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that you cannot trust the so-called previous husbands of industry who were appointed by the Conservative government.

The previous government said, "We're going to have to put a Bay Street face down there and we're going to have to show them how the private sector can fix Ontario Power Generation." As you know, they put in Mr Farlinger, Mr Osborne, Mr Brown and countless others, to the point where it is probably, in the history of this province, the recent gross mismanagement of one of our most precious carriages; that is, the generation of power.



It will go down as a period of infamy in terms of management. It was gross, it was negligent. The worst thing about it was that it basically wasted billions of dollars and we got nothing in return. As we said, that money could have gone into alternative complementary forms of energy or conservation. That is what is the most hurtful thing about the legacy of mismanagement under the Conservative patronage appointments that ran Ontario Power Generation since, I guess, they got into office in 1995-96. It is that that has put us so far behind, whereas Ontario should be ahead of the rest of the world.

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In fact, if you look at the report on Pickering by Mr Epp, a former Conservative federal energy minister, he is without a doubt unequivocal in his condemnation of the management of Ontario Power Generation. I don't think there's been a clearer condemnation of managing a provincial asset than there has been in the Epp report.

I don't think a lot of people in Ontario understand what the real cost of that mismanagement is. It not only means that we lost those billions of dollars, literally; we still, as a result of losing those billions of dollars, have only one out of four reactors working. Three are still non-functional.

What were they doing with all that money? How many hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted on consultants, who did what? That is what happens when you don't have government oversight of a public asset of this magnitude. That is why in this bill we are, along with other measures we have taken recently, trying to bring back control of this asset and trying to map out a strategy that is not going to be an instant, quick-fix solution.

Bill 4, as the parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke Centre, has said, is a reasoned, rational attempt to try and stabilize Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. That's what it is. In essence, it's an opportunity for us to try to get our energy house back in order. We're not making grandiose promises that everything in this bill is going to be the ultimate solution. It is the first significant and, I think, pragmatic step in saying there have been major foul-ups. That's what we've told the people of Ontario.

As Sean Conway, my good friend from Pembroke, used to say, all of us in this Legislature and the people who have gone before us bear some responsibility for what has happened in our guardianship over Ontario Hydro. This bill is a beginning for us to say to the people of Ontario that we have learned the lesson that you can't allow Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One to go on their own. We need intelligent, comprehensive government oversight, with the best and the brightest minds that are available to us, to rein in this critically important asset. Where it is so evident is that despite Ontario being such a technologically advanced province, when it comes to power generation we really have a lot of answering to do to the people of Ontario.

Certainly I've blamed the other party. They know deep in their hearts that they were probably given the wrong information by their whiz kids for the last eight

years. But I think we all have to say that we bear a joint responsibility to fix this, because we ultimately have no choice. There is an imperative here. We have got to come up with some pretty bold initiatives and we've got to start to think outside the box for a change. We can't just take the words of the latest experts, the latest consultants, on what the solution is. We need to do something that is much more than temporary, something that is a fix for today. It's something that's going to have to look 50 years ahead, 100 years ahead, and we have not done that so far. We have just tried to patch things.

I know that the member for Windsor-St Clair, the Minister of Energy, has been very frank with people in saying that we are committed to fixing this thing and we're not going to tell you it's going to be easy.

I have to say that this bill—I was talking to my colleague from Perth-Middlesex and we agree that this is a very good foundation step. Finally there's a bill that just doesn't try to patch things, and it's a bill that doesn't try to hide anything. If some of the new members here—and I see the member from Mississauga South—had been here in 1997, there was one of the many hydro bills the Conservative government passed, and they had an interesting clause in the bill. It was the bill that set up the Ontario Power Generation Corp. The clause in the bill that was very ominous said that all matters dealing with Ontario power—and the member from Trinity-Spadina spoke about it too—and all aspects of Ontario Power Generation were exempt from the freedom-of-information act. We asked repeatedly in this House why you would put as part of your legislation, part of the bill, that the establishment of Ontario Power Generation and all matters dealing with salaries, with the internal operations of one of the major assets of this province, would be exempt from the right of the people of Ontario to know about it? In other words, they said to the people of Ontario, "You have no right to know what's happening inside OPG," or, as they call it, Ontario patronage generator. You had no right to know what was in it.

That's what was in the bill and, to our credit in opposition, we did stand up to strenuously object to that. But we were told, "Don't worry. We've got Mr Farlinger in there; we've got all our friends in there. We trust our friends on the board of directors. In our friends we trust." That was their motto. They told us basically, "Don't try to prolong the debate, don't ask questions about what Ontario Power Generation is all about, because in our friends we trust."

You've seen in the recent report, sad to say, that we were right to be cynical and skeptical about why they exempted Ontario Power Generation from the freedom of information act. More than anything I've seen in this House in the last eight years, that was one thing that was almost a pattern. Whenever you saw an activity of government exempt from freedom of information, you knew they were up to something. In the Epp report, we knew what they were up to. We see salaries of \$1.6 million.

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** For one person.



**Mr Colle:** For one person. And then if they were fired or they quit, after working two or three years for the measly salaries of \$800,000 or whatever it was, they would also get a pension of \$320,000. In fact, the guys at OPG made Eleanor Clitheroe, the one from Hydro One with the yacht, look like Mother Teresa. I remember in this House, when Eleanor Clitheroe's salary and her shenanigans with Hydro One came up, we said, "What about OPG?" The minister on the Conservative side got up and defended, "How dare you question Mr Osborne. How dare you question Mr Brown." We were getting chastised because we said, "What's happening at OPG? When are those reactors going to come on line?" and they said, "Oh, next week, next week." We were always told, "They're coming. The reactors are coming. The money? Don't worry about the money. No problem."

As you know, in this bill it is critically important that the people of Ontario understand that what we are trying to achieve here is some kind of sustainability, some kind of rational approach to sustainable energy that is affordable. It is not going to be, sad to say, the cheap hydro we've been accustomed to. But, you know, sometimes if something is cheap, you know that in the long run you're not going to get something that you're going to have to use in the long run. So we're saying here that to have affordable hydro, you're going to have to make some tough decisions.

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We've had to say that the cap is now going to go up from 4.3 cents to 4.7 cents. Sure, that's not an easy thing to do, but we're saying it's a realistic attempt to say this is what the cost would be so you can have hydro 10 years from now, five years from now, two years from now. If you don't do that—the past government, as we know, had already driven us \$800 million in the hole by having the cap too low. So we said very clearly, and the Premier said very clearly, "We just can't stand before the people of Ontario and say that that's all right." And that's a tough thing to say.

We're saying that the average household uses about 1,000 kilowatt hours per month. It says in my notes here that the average suburban home—I don't know about the average urban house, but the small, little homes could probably use 750 kilowatt hours. We're saying that if you use a moderate amount and you're somewhat careful, you'll probably pay the lower rate. Then there's a higher rate if you go above that. So it's almost forced conservation, which isn't perfect, but at least it's an attempt to say to people, "You just can't leave your lights on and you can't just run the air conditioner 24 hours a day."

As you know, it's going to take a real paradigm shift here. If you go up and down any street in our communities, and as much as we love Christmas and Hanukkah, we see lights on everywhere. We're not saying to turn Christmas lights off, but we're going to have to start to think of our consumption of electricity in a different way, in a more modest way. As many green advocates are saying, perhaps we're going to have to think of different

ways of using our electrical appliances, using them less, not leaving our computer monitors on all the time, not buying—this Christmas, how many of us are going to go out and buy more electronic appliances? I was trying to think the other day of any electronic appliance that I don't have in my house. I was going through the brochure from the Bay, or whatever it was, and I've got this, I've got the blender, I've got the electric toaster and I've got all this stuff. I said, "There's nothing left." But I'm probably no different from anybody else. We probably all have every electric gadget made by man in our homes.

So maybe what we should think about is that we may want all these things but we don't really need all the gadgets.

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** They should just turn off their TVs right now.

**Mr Colle:** Just turn off all your appliances, except the TV, the member from Parkdale-High Park said.

I just used that reference to say that we're going to have to start to change our culture of consumption. Look at this building. I really don't know why we need all these fancy chandeliers on. What do we need them for? I just don't know. Maybe that's an example of where we're going to have to start to change things.

That's why in this bill there is also \$225 million for conservation, a \$225-million commitment in this bill for conservation measures. There are no doubt many solutions on the new generation side, which we hope will come on stream quickly as we stabilize the market, but we're also going to have to realize that the quickest way of getting more capacity, I think, is by doing some real conservation—not token conservation; some real conservation. Those are tough things to do. That is going to take a real paradigm shift like we've never seen before in this province. I hope we can, together with the people of Ontario, start to move toward that paradigm shift and get hold of this energy monster once and for all so that Ontario is no longer the laughing-stock of the world when it comes to energy generation and the way we run our most significant asset.

We used to be the model for the world. Sadly, we have really let the people of Ontario down. This is our chance here with Bill 4 to bring it up again to fix it.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments.

**Mr O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to listen to some of what the member from Eglinton-Lawrence said, but I'd take time to get prepared to respond, because in the articles I've referred to of Friday, December 5, I think it's important to recognize this: "But a source close to the industry says senior management must accept" some "of the blame," and I accept that as well.

"Back in the early 1990s, then-Chairman Maurice Strong"—appointed by Bob Rae—"pensioned off most of the engineers who knew how to run the plants.

"Three years ago, President Ron Osborne decided to drop Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd—which designed the CANDU reactors."

I guess what I'm saying there is, when they went to recover the Darlington plant, none of the skilled people—



they almost had to change the Income Tax Act and hire all those engineers and technical people back, exempting them from the rule that prohibits a pension as well as a salary from the same employer.

You know, I look at Bill 4, and the viewers there should know it's a small, innocuous technical bill. But it says in many sections—I would refer a lot of people to 79.6. It allows the Ontario Energy Board to affix and approve new rates for transmission. We're not talking about the generation-side cost.

You see, there's the generation, the transmission and the distribution. We heard earlier, we know generation costs are going up; transmission costs are going up, it says right in section 79.6; and we know the LBCs are going to go up. You said it earlier; the parliamentary assistant said that in March 2004, as well as March 2005, they will be able to recoup profit—not a bad word—but up to, it's my understanding, the point of 9%.

Of course the minister, by the way, reserves most of the control over the operations, and every article I've read said part of it has been the problem of people like Maurice Strong thinking the solution was buying a rainforest in Costa Rica. I mean, these guys were so disconnected, and I put to you I can't wait, because I think there's a big decision probably to be made, and we should watch if there's a Liberal finance minister who becomes the head of Hydro One.

**Mr Marchese:** I know the good citizens of Ontario watching this program are probably tired, and it's true; I'm getting tired as well. But please don't shut off your television sets. Yes, unplug your toaster, your microwave, even the freezer; unplug that too. Shut down the lights, get rid of all those things, but don't unplug your television. There's still another hour here, at least an hour and 20 minutes. Follow the debate because it's interesting, I think, and I liked it when my friend Michael from Eglinton-Lawrence said, "We're not here to defend Clitheroe"—neither am I, quite right. "We're not here to defend ideology"—not sure about that. "We're here to defend"—who was it, Michael? Mrs who? I'll let you say Mr and Mrs Perruzza, the ordinary guy out there, right? The little guys. We are too.

So your point is that prior to the election, you supported the rate cap because it was good for Mr and Mrs Perruzza, and now you're saying to Mr and Mrs Perruzza after the election, "Yes, it's tough, but we've got to do this," as you call it, "modest, forced kind of increase," which is reasonable. So we wanted to defend Mr and Mrs Perruzza before, and now we've got to tell them, "It's going to hurt a little bit, but we've got to do it, but we're still helping you. You're going to get a rate increase, because that's what it means, but I'm sorry, that's what we've got to do to you now that we're in power."

I've got to say, Michael, that when you were there in the opposition, you and all the others, you did a lot of finger-pointing, because that's our job. It is our job. Now you want us to stop the finger-pointing and say, "Just let the Liberals govern because they're in power, they're OK and they're doing the right things." Well, you're not.

Public power is the answer and I'll have 20 minutes to speak to that.

**2240**

**M<sup>me</sup> Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** C'est un plaisir de prendre quelques minutes pour commenter sur notre loi. La loi que nous proposons rétablirait immédiatement le régime normal de réglementation pour les tarifs de transports. Notre plan protégerait les Ontariens et les Ontariennes en leur offrant une solution équitable et prévisible en matière de prix d'électricité. Notre plan tiendrait compte du coût réel de l'électricité.

Ce plan permettrait au gouvernement et aux contribuables de l'Ontario d'arrêter de subventionner la consommation d'électricité, ce qui menace la capacité du gouvernement d'investir dans la santé et dans l'éducation.

Aussi, notre plan enverrait aux consommateurs un message fort et clair en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie. En économisant l'énergie, non seulement économisons-nous notre argent, mais nous protégeons notre environnement, car nous dépendons moins des centrales électriques alimentées au charbon, ce qui préserve l'air.

Il est certain que fermer Lakeview generating, qui utilise le charbon, est une solution très importante pour ma communauté d'Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Nous sommes toujours résolus à éliminer les centrales électriques alimentées au charbon d'ici 2007. C'est quelque chose qui est très important, et c'est pour ça que je donne mon support à notre loi.

**Mr O'Toole:** I did catch most of the remarks made by the member and I want to take some time on the issue of the fossil—

**The Speaker:** Member for Durham, if you could take the time when there's another debate; you have spoken before. Questions and comments?

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** I just want to make a couple of comments on the bill that we're debating here tonight. I think that as you listen, many of the speakers have talked about how complex this particular issue is. I think when you look back over, frankly, many decades, it is something that people in public office in this Legislature have been very reluctant to try to tackle. In looking at the press, you can see some of the problems with nuclear and with the question of management. We had the report the other day by the Honourable Jake Epp. Certainly when you look at the media trying to make all of this understandable, I think there are a couple of things that are most important to keep in mind.

One of them is the fact that it was very clear in the past I would say 10 years that we had to move into an area where generation and distribution were separated. We have to then look at how we can best provide for the future. I think one of the areas that is at the heart of this debate is the disappointment people have in the fact that the government of the day did commit to retaining the cap, and what we're looking at is that change.

**The Speaker:** The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes.



**Mr Colle:** Thank you, monsieur le Président. I'd just like to thank everybody for their comments. I listened to you attentively. When I heard the member for Durham condemn Maurice Strong for his attempt to take care of the rainforest or buy some rainforest as a matter of ameliorating the air quality, it just made me think that with the billions his friend Mr Osborne and his friend Mr Farlinger spent on the OPG fiasco, we probably could have bought the whole of Central America, never mind what Mr Strong spent. I think there's an evident message here to all of us that as members of the Legislature we've been elected to be supervisors of the assets of the province, stewards of the assets, trustees. We are here to do that job.

In the last eight years, the party opposite basically were bystanders. They were spectators while they let the backroom boys appoint patronage friends to run Ontario Hydro. We are not going to allow that. In this bill, we are allowing the Minister of Energy to take charge. We are going to make it as transparent as possible. We're going to try to make it as understandable as possible, because when it comes down to it, whether you talk about kilowatt hours or OPG or Hydro One, the people want good, reliable, affordable hydro they can depend on. They're telling us, "Do the job. We don't want to hear all the excuses. We don't want to hear all the past history. Fix it so we don't have bills that drive us out of our homes and out of our businesses. Do your job." With this bill, we're going to be enabled to start to do the job that was neglected for eight years.

**The Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr Marchese:** I thought Julia was going to speak. I want to apologize to the citizens of Ontario who are wondering why I'm not wearing a jacket. We've generated so much wind power in here that I've had to take my jacket off, it's become so hot—cumulatively, of course, not any individual in particular.

I know my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence would want us not to review the past. I know that because he argues, "Forget about what we said. Forget about what the Tories did"—they keep on pointing fingers at the Tories—"forget about what the NDP did." Then they argue, "Let's stop all that. We want to solve our hydro problems." You can't do that, right? You can't have it both ways. You just can't.

Those of you watching need to know what the Liberals said before the election—over a long period before the election—so you have a better understanding of the Liberal Party.

**Mr Colle:** They want to know how we're going to fix it. That's what they want to know.

**Mr Marchese:** Of course. I understand. I'll get to that.

*Interjection.*  
**Mr Marchese:** Please, don't shut off your televisions. Shut off everything else. Throw everything else out of the house, but keep your televisions on. We've got at least another 18 minutes here. Gilles Bisson will be coming on right after me.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** No.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes.

I've got a couple of quotes from Dalton McGuinty—I regret that I've got to keep putting my eyeglasses on and off. It's painful, but that's what I've got to do.

**Mr O'Toole:** Did he say anything to qualify it, like, "I'm only kidding"?

**Mr Marchese:** Not yet.

**Mr Berardinetti:** I want to hear about Maurice Strong.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no. You don't want to hear about him, Lorenzo. Dalton McGuinty, your leader—this is better; this is much more.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Could you direct your comments to the Chair, please, member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm just looking for—Lorenzo, where are you? In Scarborough? I keep forgetting.

Speaker, there are some succulent little quotations I have from Dalton McGuinty that would be of interest to you and to Lorenzo from Scarborough. What riding is Lorenzo from?

**Mr Colle:** Scarborough Southwest.

**Mr Marchese:** Scarborough Southwest?

You will appreciate these quotes.

November 6, 2002, Midday Magazine: "Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty says Ontario Power Generation should sell some power plants to private companies in order to get real competition in hydro." Just cogitate on that for a second as I get to the next quote.

November 5, 2002, Canadian Press: "Today we have a competitive market without competition. So we've got the worst of all worlds." Follow this, Speaker, because he's saying he supports privatization and competition, very seriously.

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November 5, 2002: "I would never have gone ahead with this without ensuring that we took the steps necessary to make sure that we have a truly competitive market," again, strong remarks for a man who supports privatization. By the way, before the election he said he didn't support it any more.

Le 5 novembre : « Nous appuyons la compétition. Maintenant, nous avons le marché où il n'existe pas la compétition. C'est aussi facile que ça. Ce que j'accuse le gouvernement d'avoir fait, c'est de complètement injecter de l'incompétence dans leur planification pour le marché. Alors, maintenant, il y a un manque total de compétition. »

**M. Levac:** Exactement la même chose.

**Mr Marchese:** Exactly, more or less repeating what he had said before and to another newspaper in English.

En français encore, le 5 novembre : « Nous aurions pris le temps pour faire certain qu'il existerait de la vraie compétition. » Not bad.

June 12, 2002: "Let me begin, Premier"—he was making a reference to the then-Premier—"by saying how pleased I am that you've come around to my way of



thinking with respect to Hydro One.” John didn’t hear that. John O’Toole can’t even hear what I’m saying.

He said, “Let me begin, Premier, by saying how pleased I am that you’ve come around to my way of thinking with respect to Hydro One.” He was speaking about Mike Harris at the time, in 2002, coming around to his way of thinking about Hydro One, ie, supporting the privatization, the sell-off of Hydro One.

Remember, this is the party that prior to the election was saying, “We don’t support privatization.” I wanted to point the finger—we need to do that, because history is important. It’s important to remember what leaders said in the past, because I know you want to forget it—I understand that—and I know you don’t want people to remember what you said. I understand that too. But we can’t let you forget it, because it has to do with what we on this side call flip-flopping, of which the Liberals have been accustomed to accusing the Tories and New Democrats.

What I want to say to the people watching is that the Liberals are the best at this, and they make no bones about it. They’ll make one promise prior to the election and change it right after—not a problem. Liberals are so good, always seeking the middle ground. If it wasn’t good before the election, “That’s OK; we’ll change it after.” If it was good before the election, “That’s OK; we’ll change it after too.” It doesn’t matter. Liberals are so good that way. They are the best we have in this parliamentary system. Only Liberals could get away with—you know what I want to say. Only Liberals could get away with—you know what I mean.

Tories can’t get away with it when they’re accused of not doing what they said. God forbid the New Democrats might not keep a promise. But when Liberals don’t keep a promise, that’s OK.

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** The Agenda for People.

**Mr Marchese:** Right, Gerard. I would have thought the minister—Not a problem, Gerard, let me get to it. I thought all of you were so clever and so bright that you would have learned from the past, and if others made mistakes and didn’t keep their promises, you wouldn’t be caught in that trap, would you, because you had so many years to learn from it. What happened? Prior to the election a mere two months ago, your leader was saying—let me get to those other succulent quotes.

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** Exfoliating.

**Mr Marchese:** Exfoliating. Yeah, that’s another one.

Prior to the election, your leader was saying, “This is a quick fix”—the rate cap—“a transparent attempt to buy votes, to buy favour with our own money.” He knew the rate cap was wrong.

Mike Colle, from Eglinton-Lawrence, knew it was wrong, although he claims he wanted to keep the rates to help senior citizens at the time. But most of you people knew, as your leader indicated, that it was a hoax, a ruse, a way of winning votes.

I have all the other quotes of the leader that say, “I think the most important thing to do at this particular point in time is to put a cap on those rates until 2006”: Focus Ontario, November 23, 2002.

You understand that you can’t have it both ways. You knew, your leader knew, that this rate cap was a political device to appease the senior citizens, who otherwise would have been screaming, as they were for years, that the hydro rates were skyrocketing. So they cleverly introduced the rate cap, but you knew that was costing us at the time \$650 million, and every month it goes up and up to the point that now it’s reached \$700 million and \$800 million. You understand, the difference between 4.3 cents and the real cost has now added to a total debt of close to 800 million bucks. Someone has to pay. Someone has to pay for that—your children and mine. It’s added to the debt.

Your Premier said that he would keep the rate cap until 2006. If he did that, the debt would keep skyrocketing.

**Mr Colle:** So that’s why we’ve got this bill.

**Mr Marchese:** But Mike, why wouldn’t you do that before the election?

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Mike says—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Mr Racco, you have to take 20 minutes to speak. Where are you from? Let me see what riding you’re from.

**Mr Colle:** Thornhill.

**Mr Marchese:** The member from Thornhill: Please, I don’t mind Michael engaging me; you should engage me too, but you should get up and spend 20 minutes to speak on this bill. Please, get up, Monsieur member from Thornhill, and take your 20 minutes and show us what you have to say. Yes or no? You have the freedom to do that.

**Mr Colle:** He will. Give him time.

**Mr Marchese:** I know. I know.

You had the opportunity before the election to do the right thing.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, no, David. You had the opportunity too to do the right thing, member from Willowdale, and you’re smart enough to know this. Yes, you are, because you’re a lawyer.

My colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence said, “But we didn’t know. We were told it was revenue-neutral.” No, no. We all knew. You’re too bright to know, and if you didn’t know, I’m not sure about the level of intellectual awareness around these issues.

**Mr Colle:** We had our doubts.

**Mr Marchese:** If you didn’t know, I worry about the intellectual depth of the Liberal caucus members. Please don’t worry, because people think we’re smart around here—at least some people.

The rate cap was a mistake. We said it was a mistake; it’s a problem. We didn’t support it, but you did, and you’ll support it to the very end.

**Mr Colle:** What were you going to do for those seniors who couldn’t pay their hydro bills? Tell me.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, I understand, all right. But Michael from Eglinton-Lawrence, you have to listen to

the member from Thornhill, because he doesn't want you to interrupt me. Please, help him to help me to help you.

The point I'm making is that we're not helping Mr and Mrs Perruzza. Let me tell you why: because you've imposed a new rate cap that merely and simply increases the rates; that's all it does. Mr and Mrs Perruzza, Monsieur Marchese, Monsieur Bisson, Monsieur Colle and every ordinary person out there are going to be paying more for their hydro rates. That's all it does. Sorry. There is nothing in the bill that speaks to conversation—nada. Il n'y a rien là. Your cap does not add up to conservation. In spite of what you say, notwithstanding what you say when you say it's a forced increase—I think that's what it was—and it will bring about some conservation, it doesn't do that.

**Mr Colle:** It will.

**Mr Marchese:** It will not do that. We need real conservation, and we're not getting it from your government. There's been a denial by your energy minister to do anything in that regard.

**Mr Colle:** But he's starting to do it.

**Mr Marchese:** But he's starting. God bless, Michael; he's starting. But up until this point this man was refuting not only the conservation policies, but also was saying that New Democrats did nothing by way of conservation. Nothing, he said. He said in fact that we stopped it.

**2300 Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale):** Rosario, you're getting agitated now.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no. Well, let me be calm.

**Mr Duguid:** Succulent.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes.

**Mr Zimmer:** Calm down, Rosario.

**Mr Marchese:** David, I don't want to irritate you. Please. If I'm a bit too loud for you, I'll just whisper. Please. Come here; I'll whisper. No problem.

Here's what I want to tell you about our conservation ideas and proposals.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Member from Perth-Middlesex, écoute, s'il te plaît.

**Mr Colle:** Rosario, don't go to Honduras.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no.

We started in our own house. Shortly after taking office, energy minister Jenny Carter began a program of improving energy efficiency in the more than 7,000 buildings owned by the provincial government. It was a huge undertaking that would take several years to complete.

In addition, we also prevailed upon Ontario Hydro to seriously ramp up its own energy efficiency efforts. In response, Hydro came out with a blizzard of small-scale programs, such as rebates for compact fluorescent light bulbs and discount coupons for small energy-saving products that could be picked up at the hardware store.

**Mr Colle:** That was a drop in the bucket.

**Mr Marchese:** You may think that that was a drop in the bucket, but we did that. In spite of the comments made by the Minister of Energy, we did that because we

believed in conservation. That is one of the things we must do to reduce consumption.

**Mr Colle:** You had beliefs, but you didn't act.

**Mr Marchese:** We did a lot, contrary to the views of the Minister of Energy.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** The member from Thornhill is getting upset. My God. Please, stay with me.

**Mr Zimmer:** It's hard.

**Mr Marchese:** I know, but that's why you're there, David, and not here. I hear you, I hear you.

Here's what we proposed by way of making sure that we deal with conservation. We proposed creating Efficiency Ontario to lead on money-saving, environmentally friendly energy-saving measures so that people can save money through using less hydro, less gas and less heating oil. We talked about—

**Mr Colle:** You talked, but you didn't act.

**Mr Marchese:** No, this was an election campaign promise that we were making.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, we can't act if we're not in government. We're saying that, prior to the election, this is what we were talking about.

We were talking about creating Efficiency Ontario, which would set up and enforce building retrofit standards, recommend the best technologies and practices, certify energy efficiency contractors, monitor results and educate people about conservation efficiency. Efficiency Ontario would work with local hydro commissions to lend you money to pay for measures that would permanently reduce your home, school or workplace energy use, both gas and electricity. It didn't happen because we didn't form the government. You did.

Few buildings in Ontario are as energy-efficient as they should be. Using current materials and technologies, we could reduce our energy use by at least 40%.

The point is, this is what we need to know. All this bill does is increase the rates in order for you to have more money in your pocket and reduce that off-the-books debt. I understand that. That's what this is about. It's not about helping Mr and Mrs Perruzza, I'm sorry, because they're going to get whacked. I'm sorry; that's all this does. It doesn't conserve energy.

I've got to tell you, the private sector has no interest in energy efficiency. It has no interest in conservation. They want you to consume more and more. Competition, privatization, deregulation doesn't help Mr and Mrs Perruzza. It doesn't. The private sector wants consumption. They don't like conservation.

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** There's a microphone, Rosario. Reduce your voice.

**Mr Marchese:** I know. I'm a bit too loud for some of the calmer Liberal members, the now government members. I understand.

I'm telling you, this Liberal government—I'll whisper it, because I'm hurting a couple of people close to me—is



committed to the privatization and deregulation set in by the Conservatives.

**Mr Qaadri:** Is that an old speech, Rosario?

**Mr Marchese:** Are you getting tired of the speeches?

**Mr Qaadri:** No, I'm enjoying your theatrics.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm glad. "Theatrics" again. This guy, man, oh man, he's got it with theatrics. Where are you from again? Etobicoke North. I don't understand. Why is it that when I'm speaking, it's theatrics, and when you speak it's Shakespearean? I don't understand; I don't get it.

**Mr Colle:** He's new.

**Mr Marchese:** He's new. Sorry. I apologize.

The point is that privatization, deregulation, doesn't work. What we need is public power. That's what we need. That's what we had. We need conservation to reduce the consumption of power and we need public power, we need hydroelectricity generation in the hands of a government-controlled agency. I'm sorry. It cannot be given away to the private sector, when all they want to do is get into our pockets and make money. That's all the private sector wants to do: make money.

Your bill does nothing but increase the rates, thus hurting the very people you purport to help, and it does nothing, absolutely nothing, to encourage conservation.

I encourage the Liberals to put up another member, maybe from Thornhill or Etobicoke North, to speak for another 20 minutes. Defend your bill, defend it. Defend Mr and Mrs Perruzza with your hydro hype. Defend them, because I don't see it.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Duguid:** I enjoyed listening to the speech from the member from Trinity-Spadina. I think it's probably a first in this House. I've never heard the word "succulent" mentioned in a political speech ever, but I think I heard it two or three times. So I enjoyed that part of his speech.

He was talking about flip-flops. One thing he failed to mention, and I'm sure he remembers because he was there, is that his own leader said on November 4 that he was for subsidized electricity. In this very House—I can't do a very good Howard Hampton imitation; I'm not really sure how I would—Mr Hampton said the following: "Minister, when are you going to start listening to your own MPPs? They're telling you that talking about a one-time rebate, trying to hide the increases in hydro bills, won't work. They want a rate freeze. They want hydro rates to go back to what they were a year ago. Will you do that, Minister?" On November 4 he wants to see a rate freeze.

On November 12, Mr Hampton said the following: "The government is now going to ask people to subsidize profit-driven hydro companies through the taxes we pay." On November 12 he's against the rate freeze.

On August 21, 2003, Howard Hampton said, "The rate cap never ever made any sense." On November 20, 2003, Mr Hampton again spoke against lifting the cap.

When we talk about flip-flops, his leader's been for and against it about two or three different times. So I think it's important that the member remember that,

because he was part of his party at that point in time as well.

We're trying to deal with a difficult problem here, a \$5.6-billion deficit. I go back to 1990 and I say, what did your government do in 1990 when you were faced with a deficit? You doubled, you tripled that deficit. You ran it up. You tried to spend your way out.

We're not going to do that. We're taking on this deficit head-on. This bill's an important part of that effort. We're levelling with the people. We're going to ensure that we get the job done.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'm going to do what Mr Marchese always does. He always tells the people at home the time. It's now 10 after 11, if you can believe it, and we've just heard another fantastic speech from the member from Trinity-Spadina. There is no question, ladies and gentlemen, and for the people at home as well, that this is one of the most colourful members of this Legislature. He has been and probably will be for a number of years.

However, he doesn't get it with hydro. During the election campaign, an ex-Ontario Hydro employee brought me a videotape of the chairman of Ontario Hydro. I think at the time it was Maurice Strong. It was when they were going to restructure Hydro, and Mr Strong said in that 15-minute clip, "Change for Ontario Hydro is not an option. It's completely necessary." They had to make changes.

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Today we stand in the Legislature and we hear the comments tonight and we hear Mr Marchese say that what was there before was perfect. Ladies and gentlemen and members of this Legislature, we all know that we are all responsible, all the different political parties, for the condition hydro is in today. It goes back decades. We can all blame and point fingers at each other, but we've all made mistakes. I hope this isn't a mistake this time. It's a broken promise, but I hope in the end it's not a mistake, that we're moving in the direction to resolve our hydro issues so we can maintain a strong economy and create jobs and do all those sorts of things we want to do in the next 10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50 years and keep Ontario strong.

**Mr Bisson:** Thank you very much to my good friend, the member for Trinity-Spadina. I really enjoyed his presentation. I thought he hit the nail on the head when he asked what this means to Mrs Perruzza, who lives in downtown Toronto, or Monsieur Bisson, who happens to live up in Timmins-James Bay. At the end of the day, it's the ratepayers who are going to be affected.

His point is well taken. First of all, the government broke a promise. The government campaigned that they were not going to remove the rate cap until the end of the rate cap set up by the previous government. That was a solemn pledge.

So the first part is, this is a broken promise. Aside from that, all this thing does is that it's going to raise the rates people pay for hydro in Ontario. Right now, we pay 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity, aside from all the other charges we get that are about half our bill. Now what we're going to end up with is that by April of this



year hydro rates are going to go up to 4.7 cents a kilowatt hour. So Mrs Perruzza or Madame Bisson, who lives up in Timmins-James Bay, know they're going to get an increase in their hydro bill to 4.7 cents as of April 1 of this year, and everything over 750 kilowatts is going to augment to 5.5 cents. But that's not bad enough. Rates by May 2005 basically are going to be market-driven. They're going to do what we currently do with natural gas. Remember the natural gas people? They're the people who go to the Ontario Energy Board and say, "We want retroactive increases for gas that we burned last winter." This fall you got your increase; the Ontario Energy Board approved, on average, a 30% increase on gas.

And we're going to be better served, Mrs Perruzza here in Toronto and Madame Bisson up in Timmins, by having an increase to their hydro bill in May 2005? This is not only a broken promise; it means we're going to pay more for hydro, and I fail to see how that helps Mrs Perruzza or—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Wilkinson:** I always enjoy the theatrical and colourful presentation from the member for Trinity-Spadina, but there's a time and a place. The good people of Ontario are at home and they're just having their little midnight nosh, they're having a little something, some milk and cookies before they go to bed. You don't want to come across too loud, too strong, because that is too much, Rosario.

I listened to the debate intently, to what you were saying about how there are no measures for conservation. I have a hard time believing that myself, because in our bill we have incentive for our electrical distribution companies to take money and reinvest it into conservation.

I was meeting with Bill Zehr. Bill is the head of Festival City Hydro in Stratford, the home of the Stratford Festival, a wonderful place for you, Rosario; there's always room for you there. Bill was telling me that we have a technology in Stratford whereby all the water heaters that the Festival City Hydro send out have an electronic device that sits on top of the water heater. Water heaters take a lot of electricity. We're not home, but our water heaters are spinning electricity and keeping that water warm for when we come back. When we have peak demand and we need supply, we use technology in Stratford. There's a radio signal on top of the water tower and it sends out a signal to all the water heaters to say, "Shut off the water heater. We can't afford this electricity right now; we need to control that demand." Not a single person in Stratford has ever phoned Festival City Hydro and said, "I don't have hot water." We need to have the measures in this bill that allow us to invest in that type of technology, that allow us to use conservation. It allows us to do these things. I'm so proud that in our Bill 2 we are extending, as the NDP agreed, the Energy Star rebate till March 31. I think this government is doing something.

**Mr Marchese:** I just want to say to the folks that Gilles Bisson from Timmins-James Bay will be speaking next, so please stay tuned. Shut off every other item that

you're using this evening. Conserve, but please stay tuned, don't go away. Hold on to your soggy socks because I'm telling you the next step after this rate increase is going to be the privatization and the continuation of the deregulation policies introduced by the Conservative Party. Mr McGuinty is committed to this. I'm telling you, hold on to those dirty socks.

Leader Dalton McGuinty says Ontario Power Generation should sell some power plants to private companies in order to get real competition in hydro. Today, "We have a competitive market without competition, so we've got the worst of all worlds." Mr McGuinty is committed to privatization, I'm telling you. That's why I read those quotes.

This is the first step toward the next one. The rate hike is but the first step. That's why I say to you, go back to the quotations of the Liberal leader. My colleague says, "We've got to think outside of the box." Outside-of-the-box thinking, in my mind, means they're contemplating continued deregulation of the market and the continual privatization of Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation. That's all it means. That's what thinking outside the box is all about. Just stay tuned. Don't go away.

This Bill 5 increases rates and nothing more. The poor citizens of Ontario are going to have to face that rate hike. There is no conservation. The only answer that we've defended is Public Power—read it—written by Howard Hampton. Public Power is the only answer to the problems we have faced since the Tories introduced deregulation and privatization, continued by the Liberals.

**The Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Sergio:** I'll be delighted, as always, to give members of the third party, the NDP, their time in the House so we cannot be accused of neglecting to hear the voice of the NDP, which, of course, represents a good chunk of the Ontario electorate. Why shouldn't we? That is why we are here tonight at this particular hour. I can't even see the clock from where I'm sitting in the House, but from any place, whether you can see the clock or not, as Rosario would do from time to time, we say we are sitting in this House debating one of the—

**Mr Marchese:** It's live.

**Mr Sergio:** It's live, yes, and to add to that, my friend from Trinity-Spadina, we have seen, I believe, the Leafs winning again. We are waiting very avidly for news from Ottawa to hear who is going to be in the next Liberal Martin cabinet. It's a very eventful night.

We are here debating a very important issue. It's not that this is the funny hour, as some would say, when we go beyond 9 o'clock, 9:30, 10 o'clock, but it is a very important issue. When we introduced this particular piece of legislation, it formed part of the policies that our leader Dalton McGuinty enunciated during the electoral campaign. We are moving very rapidly because I believe the people out there and both sides, the NDP and the Conservatives, want us to do the right thing. Absolutely. I am very confident that the Conservative members and the NDP members want us to do the right thing. So even though we are debating the issue and we hear a number



of different views, which is fine, in their hearts they know that we have got to do it. We have to do it, not because we say so, because we are the government, but because it is the best thing for the people of Ontario.

**Mr Marchese:** Mr and Mrs Perruzza.

**Mr Sergio:** Absolutely. Do you know what, my friend Rosario? We are some 40 years behind in doing the right thing. When our friend, I believe it was the member from Simcoe North, said, "All governments in the past made mistakes"—

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, yeah.

**Mr Sergio:**—and you agree. Of course they did. Why did we let it go for 40 years if we knew it was wrong? I believe that this is the time to take the bull by the horns and say that what the Conservatives did for 40 years—and then there was a series of Conservative governments, and then we had some Liberals and then we had some NDP. No one said, "Hey folks, let's stop playing this game. Let's stop using hydro as a football, because down the line, something has got to give."

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When Dalton McGuinty said we have to get our house in order, he meant that. He didn't mean to say that we're going to do this and that, or something will fall from the sky—no, no. He started saying, "We've got to do something. We've got to get our house in order. We've got to get hydro under control as well, so we can do all the other things that we said we would do with respect to health care, education, the environment and so forth."

In the commotion when I started, I didn't take a look at the clock, but I believe I started about 20 minutes ago, so I have about another five minutes. I am going to divide our time with the member from Scarborough Southeast, I believe.

**Mr Berardinetti:** Southwest.

**Mr Sergio:** Southwest. Close enough.

We have to say that it is time to stop the bleeding. It is time, on behalf of the people of Ontario, to say, "Folks, we have been living perhaps too well with respect to hydro. If no one has done anything for 40 years, let's take a look at it." Because everyone, including my friends the Perruzza family—Ontario taxpayers—when they get their hydro bill, what do they see on that bill? I believe we are paying some 8%, which represents half of the stranded debt—some \$38 billion—which all the Perruzzas of Ontario have to pay on a monthly or a quarterly basis, whenever they get their hydro bill. It's right in there. Do you know what? Now it's being imposed on the Perruzzas of Ontario that they have to pay.

Do you know what's odd? As we debate the pros and cons of whether this is good or not, members on the opposite side—excluding the ones in the middle because they belong to the government side. We are saying, if we don't do it now, who is going to do it? We presented it to the people of Ontario in such a way that they said, "I think it's fair. I think it's the start of bringing stability to this most unstable and most important agency in Ontario."

Everybody spoke about this cap. With all due respect to the members, and even Mr Hampton when he said, "We never wanted the cap," and stuff like that, and "You guys supported it"—well, he didn't want the cap but now he's the first one to say we should have the cap. Do you know what this means? It means continuing to perpetuate on the people of Ontario the same state that we did for the last 40 or 50 years.

Since the cap came into the picture, I think we have increased the \$5.6 billion—we all agree it's there. We have added to that some \$800 million. That transfers into some \$280 million, I believe, in a year's time—\$280 million to service the increase which the former Conservative government caused because of the cap. You think it's fair? I don't think it's fair.

When we said to the people of Ontario, "What would you rather do, pay maybe an extra \$5 a month and see that we get rid of this monster, see that we start to deal with those issues and bring some sanity into the health care system, into the education system, into long-term care, into the tuition issues for our students, into clean water, clean air?" they said, "Yes, we would rather do that."

We have to have the fortitude and the foresight to tell the people of Ontario the truth. We have been speaking a lot recently in this House about being honest, truthful and transparent. If we can do that, the people of Ontario will recognize that and will appreciate what the Liberal government is trying to accomplish.

If we don't take care of that, the increase on the \$800 million alone will be growing to about \$1.1 billion by 2007. I don't have to tell my friends in the House here what a government could do with \$1.1 billion.

Therefore, as my time is coming to a close, and I'm not even having the possibility of mentioning a quarter of what I wanted to say, let me say to the members on the opposite side, let's stop playing games with this important issue. Let's look at the facts. Let's look at the reality. Let's look at what the people of Ontario want. Let's work with the government. Let's start to do the right thing. Let's bring some sanity and some long-term stability to a very important area for the single taxpayer, for the small business person, who is being very adversely affected by the present situation. I am sure that with proper consultation and the right attitude we can bring some reasonable, long-term stability to Ontario hydro.

**Mr Berardinetti:** I thank the member for—York Southwest is it?

**Mr Sergio:** York West.

**Mr Berardinetti:** York West. My apologies; my riding is Scarborough Southwest. I thank the member for York West for sharing his time with me.

We've been through this quite extensively in terms of debating it and earlier readings and also with committee, and we've heard the announcements made by the minister regarding the situation with Pickering, dealing with some of the bureaucrats there and some of the other bureaucrats who work at OPG.



I'm glad the member for Trinity-Spadina is back, because I just wanted to—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Berardinetti:** I'm new, so I'm learning. What I want to say is that during the recent election, it wasn't too long ago, a few months ago, when I was knocking on doors like the rest of us were, and people were saying to me, "Mr Berardinetti, fix the problems. Fix the problems of education. Fix the problem of health care. Fix the problem with the blackouts and the electricity problems that are occurring in Ontario," which is supposed to have one of the best natural resources in terms of Niagara Falls, some of the earliest and best nuclear stations, some of the best universities that can look at innovative, new energy sources. People want solutions to problems.

To the member for Trinity-Spadina, who is saying, "Please stay up and listen. There are a lot of problems with what the Liberals are trying to bring forward," the Liberals today, the government today, are trying to fix a problem. They are trying to fix a huge asset, a huge entity, which has existed for many, many years, which, as some speakers said earlier, is the responsibility of all members here and has gone on from earlier Legislatures. It didn't just pop up today or in these last few months; it has existed a long time.

So what have we done? We were elected on October 2. The cabinet was sworn in on October 23. We began sitting in November; the government began sitting in November. One of the first bills we bring forward is Bill 4, to deal with the energy and the electricity and the price cap put in place by the former Tory government.

2330

Simply put, the price cap is unrealistic, and that's been echoed by many earlier speakers. Some of them are perhaps much more knowledgeable about this than I am, but the bottom line is that we need to fix a broken problem. I just want to basically bring to this House's attention some research I've been doing.

I look at a book called *Rae Days*, by Thomas Walkom. In his book he talks about 1992 and what was happening at that time. He mentions in his book that "Hydro was in serious straits." He says the "recession had slashed the demand for power" and "at the same time, the massive Darlington nuclear station east of Toronto had finally come on line, increasing the utility's generating capacity. Darlington, begun by the former Conservative government in 1981, had been a disaster—fraught with delays and cost overruns. When it finally came on-stream 10 years later, its cost was \$14 billion, more than twice the original estimate.

"Hydro had borrowed heavily to pay for Darlington, Pickering and the province's other nuclear plants. By 1992, it found itself with a massive \$36-billion debt.

"The utility's response had been to jack up rates. By 1992, rates were 30% higher than they had been two years earlier when the NDP had come to power. Senior citizens were flooding Energy Minister Brian Charlton's office with calls, saying they could no longer afford to

pay their electricity bills. The province's manufacturers" did the same thing.

"To make matters worse, Hydro Chairman Mark Eliesen—Rae's personal appointment—had just quit in a huff."

The book goes on to say that Maurice Strong was brought on board to try to deal with the problem. Maurice Strong was supposed to be seen as this guru who could solve the problem. The book goes on to talk about what he tried to do. He and Bob Rae and the government of the day were trying to find a solution to the problem.

The book then goes on to say that the salary paid to Strong was in the \$400,000 range and also that no solution could be found to the energy problem. "In May 1994, Wildman"—who I guess was a member of the NDP government at the time—"was annoyed and embarrassed to find that, without notifying the government, Strong had begun negotiations to purchase a 12,500-hectare rain forest in Costa Rica. Opposition MPPs pointed out that Strong had investments in Costa Rica and questioned why a crown corporation that was \$36 billion in debt needed a rain forest. The newspapers had a field day with, as one Toronto Star headline writer called him, 'Mo of the Jungle.'

"Strong, however, was unrepentant. Jungle acquisition was an idea worth looking into, he insisted, one in line with the most modern principles of sustainable development. After all, trees in Central America could absorb the carbon dioxide that Hydro and other world polluters produced. Critics, he said, were focusing 'primarily on the petty, the peripheral and the parochial.' Ministers such as Frances Lankin who were dubious about the jungle scheme were speaking 'impulsively.' Soon, some of Strong's powerful friends in business and politics were telephoning opposition MPPs such as Liberal Sean Conway, advising them to lay off. The story quickly died....

"When Strong announced he would lay off 4,500 Hydro workers, the Premier praised him for being 'courageous.' While Rae had never been comfortable with the idea of Eliesen making \$400,000 a year, he saw nothing wrong with Strong's \$425,000-a-year salary. Indeed, when reporters questioned the sum, the Premier seemed personally offended that anyone could question the worth of such a man."

I welcome anyone to read this book. It's research I've done myself. I have also read excerpts of Mr Hampton's book on public power. Again, I don't buy the idea of doing it. In fact, the previous book I was reading from made it clear that very serious problems existed, that a \$36-billion debt existed, and the problem was not solved.

We're not saying that tomorrow morning people are going to wake up and everything will be solved. What we're saying is that the rate cap imposed by the Tories is unsustainable, it's not revenue-neutral, as we originally believed it would be, and the solution is to raise that cap and to bring in other reforms that will help to make the system work.

When I started speaking a few minutes ago, I said that when I knocked on doors, people said to me at the door,



"Mr Berardinetti, fix our problems." Fixing our problems doesn't mean maintaining artificial rates, price caps, that are going to cost, indirectly, millions of dollars. Fixing the problem doesn't mean running off to Costa Rica and buying thousands of hectares of rain forest for God knows what reason. Fixing the problem doesn't mean paying bureaucrats tremendous amounts of money and not letting those amounts be known to the general public.

We have introduced legislation this week to start opening and looking at the books of OPG and of Hydro to see what people are making there, to see what's going on there. This closed door, this cave will finally have some light shed upon it and hopefully we will begin to move in the right direction.

That's one of the reasons I ran in the last election. I truly believe that this government and the energy minister and all members of this Liberal government are trying to find solutions to difficult problems. We cannot be everything to everybody and we don't claim to be everything to everybody. Whether it be discussion on the school tax credit or giving seniors the tax break, we had to say no to people, and here is another tough decision where we have to say, "You know what? The cap that was set was artificial. We've got to move it in a direction that solves the problem, and this particular legislation does it." That's why I support it.

**The Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr O'Toole:** I think we've really beaten this little thing to death. It doesn't seem that the Liberals are prepared to move one bit, from everything I can perceive here. I think there are a few things that are missing.

There are a couple of policy decisions I'd be happy to know in some detail in the response to this: if they're going to introduce anything about time-of-use metering or time-of-rate metering; whether they're going to use anything that was mentioned by Mr Wilkinson, the fact that there are communities, local distribution companies, in Ontario that do have the kinds of simple techniques and technology that are about \$300 per household that would give consumers some power to turn off that hot water heater at the right time. It's without those tools that I'm afraid of those persons.

The people who are the most vulnerable, the seniors perhaps on fixed incomes, who may not be technologically interested in some of these innovative solutions, are not being given any help. In fact, sometimes you have to invest a few dollars to save a few dollars.

Another thing I hear a lot about is—I live in a very large, agricultural riding in Durham. In fact, some very innovative farm leaders, not just in greenhouse who put on a demonstration here tonight using biomass, but wind technology—I'm familiar with Iowa, which is one of the largest dairy states in the United States, and almost all of the farms have wind generators, which actually allow net metering. In other words, when they're not using the 20 or 50 kilowatt hours, it's feeding back into the grid, and they're getting paid for that power that's not being used.

I want to see some really innovative suggestions. I'm prepared to say that even we had an exit strategy. We

told the truth about it, and the other side maybe didn't understand and that's why they promised one thing and did another. But allowing new solutions to this problem is really something that would lead me to support this otherwise failed promise.

**Mr Bisson:** I thought it interesting that both the government members said, "We've got to get on with the job," and that somehow they were going to go out and fix the problem. I just want to remind the two members who spoke that the job that you promised you would do is what? It was to keep the rate caps on. Now I think the rate caps were, quite frankly, the wrong thing, and that's why I voted against them. But I listened intently in the last provincial election, and Liberals went around knocking on doors and said, "Vote for us. We're going to keep the rate cap in place until 2006." I remember that promise. So for Liberals who come into this House today and say, "We've got to go and do the job," I guess the job is to fill John Baird's promise-breakers club. That's what they're doing tonight. They all want to be members of the John Baird promise-breakers club. They're all trying to get on the record tonight to show that they can break promises as backbenchers in a Liberal government just as well as Dalton McGuinty can. I thought that was an interesting point.

2340

Then they come here and say, "The opposition has got to stop playing games." I thought that was rather interesting, because I remember that Mr Sergio and other Liberals sitting on this side of the House railed against the government on hydro, one day saying they were in favour of privatization, the next day saying they were opposed to privatization; one day saying they wanted the opening of the market, the next day saying they didn't want the opening of the market. They were all over here till Sunday when they were sitting in opposition, and all of a sudden they become the respectful government members who say, "We're here to do the job."

I remind you that the job you were charged to do was not to break your promise, which was to keep the rate caps in place. You're all breaking a promise when you stand up in this House and talk about the positiveness of this bill. You're joining Dalton McGuinty's Liberal promise-breakers club that has been set up by Mr Baird.

I just say to the members across the way, you Liberals are really, really good at breaking promises.

**Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** As I mentioned in my maiden speech earlier—and I'd like to thank all who stayed and so courteously listened to my maiden speech; thank you so much—my grandfather worked with Sir Adam Beck, the father of Ontario Hydro. I now reference what the member from Simcoe North mentioned—I believe I heard this correctly—that the mess of hydro was caused here by successive governments. It became a political football. The one thing that this bill does very clearly is it takes the pricing for hydro out of the hands of the politicians, it takes it out of the football field and puts it in the hands of an independent body, the Ontario Energy Board. That is a

very good first step to depoliticizing this process. This is a very sensible bill. This is a sensible start to cleaning up, as the member for Simcoe North mentioned, a long-created mess in this case.

I listen in this House day after day—and I've worked in the media, and I know the way these sorts of things work with opposition parties. They say it over and over again. If it's a mantra, then they actually think that maybe they make it true. There are no broken promises here. It is getting down to doing the work. So they can say "broken promises" day in and day out, because they have nothing else really interesting to say, but it does not make it true. We are doing a solid job here. We are working very hard to clean up not just the mess of the previous government, but the one before that as well.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Mossop:** Yes, the mess behind me. We're trying to clean up the one behind me here as well. It's going to take more than less than two months in office to do that. The people of Ontario know that. They're sensible people. They understand that there's a problem here to be fixed. Everybody I've talked to understands it, and they are willing to be patient and let us do our job.

**Mr Marchese:** The focus of this bill is to increase rates, recap the cap. That's what the bill is about.

**Mr Colle:** Adjust the cap.

**Mr Marchese:** The member from Scarborough Southwest says that during the election people told him—Mr and Mrs Perruzza types—"Just fix the problem." Fixing the problem was keeping the rate cap. Dalton McGuinty said, September 19, 2003—remember, the election was October 2; just a couple of weeks before—as he was talking to Mr and Mrs Perruzza at the door, in terms of fixing the hydro problem, "It will take time to rebuild our hydro system, so we will keep electricity rates where they are until 2006."

I'm not sure, as a former journalist from Stoney Creek—that's what her leader said repeatedly over and over again; that's what he said.

The member for York West says, "We have a stranded debt; it's big." So why would you so naively support the rate cap that adds to the stranded debt to the tune of \$700 million? Don't tell me you didn't know. You can't be that naive, or totally out of odds, or so lacking insights or intellectual foresight not to see that. Please, you're making me nervous, and you're making the electorate nervous about your ability to run this place.

So after the election, says the member for Scarborough Southwest, "The rate cap is unrealistic." Well, Dalton didn't think so two weeks prior to the election. He didn't.

The answer is conservation, which Bill 4 doesn't do, and public power, which is what our leader recommends, as a solution to our energy problem.

**The Speaker:** The member for York West has two minutes to wrap up.

**Mr Sergio:** My thanks to the members for Durham, Timmins-James Bay, Stoney Creek, and of course my friend from Trinity-Spadina.

As I said before, if there is one thing the members of this House want and the people out there want from their own government, it is—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Sergio:** Yes, I think we have a very good start. It's to have a very prudent and very transparent government. I believe that in the last few days we have been in power we have shown that to the people of Ontario and to the members of the third party and to the members of the opposition. The people of Ontario want nothing less than a fair, transparent government. If we had had that transparency years ago, we wouldn't have this mess today on our hands. We absolutely wouldn't have this mess.

So what we are saying—and what the people of Ontario want to know—is that with the \$280 million in interest that we have to pay on the debt that has been accumulated in the last eight months, we could pay for some 15,000 nurses, some 16,000 teachers and some 1,000 MRI machines. These are the things the people of Ontario want to hear. This is what we mean when we say we have to start to fix the problems here. Hydro is only one, but I think there are so many other things the people of Ontario want us to do.

**Mr Colle:** What about the seniors?

**Mr Sergio:** Of course, the seniors occupy number one with every member of this House, I will say to this member, and they deserve our attention. When it comes to hydro, we are taking them into consideration.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4, 2003, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Duncan has moved third reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

Any against, say "nay."

It seems the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have a note here, and this note is dated today, December 11, 2003. It says, "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr Duncan for the third reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing, be deferred until Monday, December 15, 2003." The vote is deferred.

It being close to 12 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 2349.*



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First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 15 December 2003

Lundi 15 décembre 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### ESTIMATES

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** Mr Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates and supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2004 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES IN PARRY SOUND-MUSKOKA

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Community Living Parry Sound. On November 24, 2003, Community Living Ontario held a Celebration of Achievement Breakfast in Toronto. At that time, Community Living Parry Sound received the James L. Montgomerie Community Award. This award is presented each year by Community Living Ontario to an organization that has demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting inclusion and has worked to ensure that people with developmental disabilities live in their communities as fully participating citizens. Paula Mullen, manager of children's services, and Jo-Anne Demick, executive director, accepted the award.

The areas of achievement highlighted were in social, recreational, educational and the innovative respite services being offered. Community Living Parry Sound has demonstrated a dedicated and creative approach to enhancing the lives of children and families in the Parry Sound area. They respond to the needs of the community with respect, hard work and enthusiasm. Community Living Parry Sound is willing to embrace new ideas. Community Living Parry Sound is a vital part of the community and provides invaluable assistance and support for people with disabilities and their families. I would like to personally congratulate them for receiving this well-deserved recognition.

I would also like to recognize a group of volunteers in the Huntsville area. The Salvation Army food drive, through the generosity of the people of Huntsville, has raised 20 tonnes of food this season. This exceeds the donations received last year. The collection effort was led by the Huntsville Fire Department and supported by the Huntsville Air Cadets, Muskoka ambulance paramedics, the OPP, the Du-Ya-Wanna Snowmobile Club and Motorcyclists of Muskoka. I would like to congratulate the people of Huntsville and its many volunteers for their generous spirit.

### GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance for hosting a reception last Thursday. A special thank you to Cacciavillani farms, a greenhouse grower from Leamington, in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. Their wonderful display of poinsettias certainly added to the festive season here at Queen's Park.

The alliance, located here in Ontario, represents the largest cluster of greenhouse production in North America. The greenhouse industry in Essex county and Chatham-Kent produced \$300 million of crops in 2001, and the almost 1,000 greenhouses in the Leamington and Kingsville area account for 83% of the total number of greenhouses in Ontario. This province claims more than half the greenhouse vegetables produced in Canada. In fact, Leamington has the largest concentration of greenhouse vegetable growers in North America. Flowers, cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers and a variety of other vegetables are grown here.

We know that agriculture is the second-largest industry in Ontario. The greenhouse industry has a farm gate value of over \$1 billion annually. This industry is crucial to Ontario's economy. The Dalton McGuinty government recognizes the importance of the greenhouse industry in Ontario and thanks the growers for their hard work and their contribution to our province.

### CONFLICT IN IRAQ

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I rise in the legislature today to join with many people around the world to rejoice in the long-awaited capture of Saddam Hussein. There is an important local connection in my riding to the new freedom of the people in Iraq. I know of at least half a dozen people, my constituents—



for example, four people from Six Nations—who have been on the ground with US forces, fighting in Iraq. Several others have been on board a ship in the Gulf.

As far as those on the ground, brave men like Aaron White, Sergeant Neil Anthony, Clint Doxtator and Karl Green put their lives on the line in Iraq to help bring liberty to the deserving people of Iraq. All the while, our federal counterparts played it safe by watching their allies from the sidelines in Ottawa. Perhaps with new leadership, Canada will stretch out its hand to our friends in the United States and send some troops. Such a gesture is long overdue, and I can't think of anything more fitting for the families of my riding who are anxiously awaiting the return of their loved ones from both Iraq and the Gulf.

To all those who made the choice and the sacrifice to head overseas, I congratulate you on a job well done. You helped chase down a man who caused much grief to the people of his country as well as to people elsewhere around the world.

#### BERNARD WOLPERT

**Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** We are all, at times, catapulted from the comfort of our daily journey. Today I pay tribute to a person who, in an earnest, gentle and humble manner, changed my world. The person of whom I speak is Bernard Wolpert. Mr Wolpert, an exceptionally bright, well-educated man who immigrated to Canada many years ago to achieve his personal vision of success for his family, embodies all that is great about the people of Hamilton. He is a soft-spoken man in a world where constant noise challenges our senses to absorb anything.

He worked as an engineer in the once mighty Canadian Westinghouse office, which no longer exists in Hamilton, one of many large employers such as Firestone, JI Case, International Harvester and Procter & Gamble, all names synonymous with another time in history in the mighty city of Hamilton.

Bernard is a man whose faith empowers him, a man who walks his ideals rather than showcasing himself. He cares for his very ill wife in his retirement, with graciousness and the quiet humility of service, and yet he still found time to search me out to support the democracy he embraces.

Bernard demonstrates the human qualities that strengthen our community and make Hamilton great. Citizens like Bernard encourage all of us to move forward and also to help Hamilton achieve its destiny of greatness by creating the resiliency we all need in a tough economic time.

1340

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):** The clock's rolling. I'll have to talk quickly.

I rise today to address an issue of tax unfairness which has been brought to my attention by the Ontario Private Campgrounds Association and a number of its members which operate campground facilities in my riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. These hard-working campground operators in my area have been informed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, which reports to the Minister of Finance, that under an omitted assessment notice sent out in November, the number of trailers in their campgrounds are now assessable and that their taxes would be going up accordingly. Worse still, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, in its zeal to collect more taxes, has informed the campground operators that this omitted assessment notice is retroactive to the 2003 tax year.

These hard-working small business owners in my riding and indeed across the province want to know why these assessments are going out now, after the tourism season is over and their books are effectively closed, and more importantly, why this new-found tax is retroactive to last season.

Hard-working campground operators are vital to the tourism sector. They want to know why they are being overtaxed and are being asked to pay retroactively. They are expecting an answer from this government. They will not be ignored.

#### ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** Since 1903 the Archives of Ontario have provided a window on the past for all Ontarians, connecting us with our ancestors, our communities and our government. The year 2003 is the 100th anniversary year of this great institution. I'm proud today to have an opportunity to pay tribute to the great work being done at the Archives of Ontario.

I recently received a publication called Documenting a Province, which celebrates Ontario's rich history. As this publication tells us, the archives hold an enormous wealth of material in trust for the people of Ontario: over 3.5 million photographs, thousands of maps and architectural drawings, not to mention records of the Ontario government and of private individuals and groups. The collections of the Archives of Ontario are truly a tribute to the past and a resource for the future.

I want to pay tribute to the Archives of Ontario on this important 100th-year milestone and thank all of those great archivists for keeping the rich history and heritage of this province preserved for generations to come.

#### LANDFILL

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I rise today to inform the House about a successful groundwater protection event I organized in my riding on Friday, December 12. In spite of stormy winter conditions, over 200 people gathered at the farm of Roy Nahujs to help me launch a petition on landfill site 41 in the township of

Tiny. The petition asks Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky to place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation that she recently promised is implemented in our province.

Initially I had requested the county of Simcoe to grant me access to site 41 to look at the test well. I regret that the county denied me such access, but I, like the people who braved the weather to attend the event, was determined to make it happen, to give site 41 the profile it needs to get the minister's and the ministry's attention.

The media have played a vital, pivotal role in helping us deliver the message locally and to Queen's Park that site 41 could be subject to groundwater contamination if it proceeds as planned. The overflowing wells on the property of site 41, which have been captured on video, paint a telling picture and serve as a fair warning of potential groundwater contamination at site 41.

I will make sure that Minister Dombrowsky receives a copy of this video so she can see for herself the imminent danger of developing site 41 as a landfill.

#### GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

**Ms Monique Smith (Nipissing):** I rise today to discuss the new direction that the government of Ontario is taking. This past Friday marked 50 days since the new government of Ontario was sworn in. In that time we have changed the direction of government and are putting an end to mismanagement and incompetence.

Let me highlight some of the positive changes that have come about in the last 50 days. The Tories hid a \$5.6-billion deficit. We are giving the people of Ontario the straight goods.

They ignored the problems in long-term care for eight years. We've already committed to a full review of the system.

They wanted to give millions of dollars to private schools. We took that money and put it where it's most needed—in public schools.

They allowed a \$3-billion boondoggle at OPG. We reasserted public oversight and control.

They whined and complained about the federal government. We negotiated \$330 million in SARS compensation and another \$771 million in health care funding.

They were jeopardizing public services to finance tax giveaways to large corporations. We're protecting those services by rolling back the giveaways.

We've encountered some unexpected obstacles since we took office, but the people of Ontario understand that we are taking responsible action in order to deliver the real, positive change we promised. I'm proud to be part of a government that puts the people of this province first, for a change.

#### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** It's with great regret that I rise today to ask a very important question: What do you get when you have a government who

breaks their election campaign promises, a government who brings in the biggest tax increase in the province of Ontario? What do you get when a government spends its entire first six weeks seeking to vilify the former Conservative government? What do you get when you have a government sworn into office with no job creation strategy?

The verdict is in, and regrettably the answer is: 7,000 lost jobs. That's the first verdict in on this government: 7,000 fewer jobs. That means less hope, less prosperity, less opportunity for working families and the people of Ontario. It shows that when you send a message around the world that taxes are on the rise, it says that Ontario is not a place to invest and to create jobs.

It reached a new peak last week when the centre of capitalism in the western world, the New York Stock Exchange, would rather have the head of Red China ring the bell than the Premier of the province of Ontario. I think that's regrettable. I think it's unfortunate. I don't know whether the folks at the New York Stock Exchange believe that Red China is somehow a more business friendly environment, but for 7,000 families in Ontario this government is bad news for the economy.

**Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member from Nepean-Carleton referred to the People's Republic of China as Red China, and I take exception to that. I would like him to withdraw that comment.

**Mr Baird:** I withdraw "Red" and insert "Communist."

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Member for Nepean-Carleton, did I hear a withdrawal?

**Mr Baird:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** "I withdraw," you said.

**Mr Baird:** Mr Speaker, I said I would withdraw and insert the word "Communist."

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's an honour for me to introduce some gentlemen in the—

**The Speaker:** I'll take that, but the member for Toronto-Danforth was getting up on her member's statement.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Frasier, CSI, Law and Order, the West Wing—they are must-see TV, but they're not the only good shows gracing the small screen these days. On Saturday I watched the premiere of a new classic, Global TV's Liberal Lob of the Week. The new Focus Ontario feature exposes the worst examples of the Liberal softball questions that shield Dalton McGuinty from the tough questions he fears. If the Liberals stop the softball, opposition MPPs could ask McGuinty hardball questions about the environment, for instance, questions like, "Why did you betray your promise to protect the Oak Ridges moraine? Why won't you keep your promise to protect the Dufferin-Rouge agricultural preserve? Why won't you ban mega-hog barns that put our drinking water at risk?"



Why won't you just say no to dumping Toronto's garbage at Adams mine?"

I say to Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, his Liberal Lob of the Week and his Liberal Lob of the Week TV stars, playing games with question period is bad news for the environment. Stop the softball questions and face the hardball questions Ontarians want answered, starting today.

1350

### VISITORS

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish to draw the members' attention to the members' gallery. We have several members here from the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association: Stephen Lee, manager, and Jong-Kyu Huh, president. Please join me in welcoming them.

### MEMBER'S ANNIVERSARY

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to announce a very important anniversary of one of our colleagues.

On December 14, it will have been 10 years ago that Bruce Crozier first took his seat in this Legislature as the member for Essex South. It's now known as the riding of Essex. In the 10 years that my friend and colleague has been here at Queen's Park, those of us who have worked with him have come to know him as a man of great integrity.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** That wasn't a point of order, and I would ask members, when I do stand, if you could sit at the time. It's not a point of order, but again, what can I do when you're recognizing an individual like this?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### STRONG COMMUNITIES (PLANNING AMENDMENT) ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DES COLLECTIVITÉS (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE)

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gerretsen?

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** I'll wait for ministerial statements.

### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** I rise today to announce that our government is taking much-needed action to protect our environment.

Under the Tories, perhaps no area of provincial responsibility has been so shamefully neglected as the stewardship of Ontario's environment. The Tories have left this province with an environmental deficit.

In less than a decade, Ontario has gone from being a world leader in urban planning to a place where rampant urban sprawl is chewing up valuable farmland at an unprecedented rate. Ontario's resources and opportunities have been squandered. Instead of clean air and land and safe water, the previous government gave us ineffective policies and insufficient funding and staff. Their vision for the environment was about as clear as the Toronto skyline during a smog alert. Ontarians understand that if they can't trust their drinking water because of government indifference, their quality of life suffers. Ontarians understand that if they spend hours stuck in gridlock because of uncontrolled sprawl, their quality of life suffers. And Ontarians understand that if these basics can't be managed correctly, if we can't maintain our critical infrastructures, then our economy suffers. The water we drink, the land that sustains us, the beauty of our urban and rural environments, these are priorities that matter to Ontarians because they are essential to maintaining our high quality of life. That's why we are changing the direction of government.

Our goal is nothing less than this: We will make Ontario a world leader in greener, more liveable communities. We will protect the health and safety of our citizens and build a quality of life that is second to none. The Walkerton inquiry found that the previous government's cuts to environmental protection contributed to that tragedy. One of the basic responsibilities of government is to keep our drinking water safe, a responsibility this government takes seriously. We will work hard to ensure Ontario has the cleanest, safest water anywhere in North America.

Today I am pleased to announce that our government will hire 33 new, full-time water inspectors, investigators and other compliance staff. We will do this to protect Ontario's drinking water. Drinking water protection, from source to tap, is a key part of our agenda for positive change. We are moving in a new and better direction by increasing the number of water inspectors by 25%. At the present time there are 81 water inspectors. With this announcement, there will be 101 water in-

spectors in Ontario. This is the first of many steps we're taking to protect our families and the environment and to fulfill the recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry.

This week, our government will make a series of announcements that will improve the quality of life in Ontario by protecting our environment. In the weeks and months ahead, our government will take real action that will help build cleaner, greener communities in Ontario. This is part of the real, positive change that Ontarians have demanded and that our government is delivering. And while the previous government pitted one group against another to protect the special interests of the few, our government will work together with all partners to protect the environment that we all share. Together we'll build an environmental legacy that will make Ontario the envy of the world once again.

### LAND USE PLANNING

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** I'm pleased to introduce a bill this afternoon that aims to empower communities to shape their own destinies. The bill, if passed, will give communities the much-needed tools to control their own planning. It will put the ability to guide urban development back into the hands of locally elected decision-makers. It will make for stronger communities which, as we all know, are good for our quality of life and our economy. It marks another important step in our agenda for positive change.

Under the previous government, all too often developers and the Ontario Municipal Board dominated the land use planning process. All too often it worked against the public interest. We have listened to the concerns of local governments regarding the land use planning process and we are acting on them decisively. For too long, municipalities have been frustrated in their attempts to control urban sprawl. We need to put a stop to this disorder by giving power back to municipalities.

1400

The McGuinty government is keeping its commitment to take Ontario in a new direction. We want to give communities the tools they need to grow smart. We're giving the people of Ontario a real voice in the way their communities grow and prosper. The principles of accountability and transparency should be returned to local planning.

This government values the important work local councils do. We know how decisions made at that level have an effect right here in people's backyards, and we know the kind of strong communities we can build when we work co-operatively with municipalities. This province's strength comes from the diversity of its communities. The McGuinty government is committed to bringing in a new era of co-operation between the province and municipalities.

The previous Tory government diminished the voices of Ontarians in their own communities. We are moving quickly in our agenda for positive change by taking steps

that would ensure that unwanted urban expansions couldn't be forced upon communities.

For too long, responsible planning decisions by municipal councils have been overturned by the Ontario Municipal Board. It had the effect of encouraging sprawl. It took decisions that should have been in the hands of local councils and put them in the hands of an unelected, unaccountable board. No more. Local people, local governments should decide what happens to their communities.

This government knows how precious our wetlands, greenspaces and rural areas are, and of their value to the well-being of our environment, to our health and to the character of this province.

That's why today I'm proud to introduce the Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act. The previous government ignored municipalities' concerns about the land use planning process. The proposed Strong Communities Act, if passed, will address those concerns by giving our democratically elected local governments the planning authority that rightfully belongs to them.

This act would make the Planning Act relevant once again. It typifies a new era of co-operation between the province and its municipalities. The bill, if passed, would help to address municipal concerns and substantially increase opportunity for public input into the planning process by increasing the number of days for municipalities to review substantial land use applications.

Under the Tories, the planning process was not a sufficiently open process. This bill would make government work for the people by making the planning process more open and transparent to Ontarians.

The Strong Communities Act, if passed, would help to ensure that locally elected officials remained in control of land use planning in their municipality. It would do this by eliminating loopholes, by ending the process that allows appeals to the OMB over applications that would alter urban boundaries.

This, by the way, is one of the steps in a series of very important reforms to the Ontario Municipal Board. Those reforms are badly needed. The OMB has proven in the past to be a large and expensive obstacle to smart growth. For example, in the last five years, municipalities in the GTA alone spent more than \$20 million fighting OMB decisions. In the township of Uxbridge, for example, property taxes had to go up just to pay for the lawyers it needed to fight a developer at the OMB. No longer. If passed, the Strong Communities Act would eliminate an applicant's right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board if a municipality does not give notice of a public meeting for an official plan amendment application within 45 days.

The previous government diminished the voices of Ontarians in their own communities. The McGuinty government wants to give Ontarians a real and significant voice in the way their communities grow and prosper. Our government intends to give municipalities and the OMB rules that would provide a clear direction for community planning.



The bill, if passed, would ensure that the will of the people of Ontario, as expressed through their local councils, is respected when we plan for the growth of strong and healthy communities. We all know that environmental protection and good planning benefit everyone.

There are rules in the provincial policy statement set out for responsible, sustainable community planning and environmental protection. Over the last eight years, those rules have been largely ignored. No longer. If enacted, the proposed Strong Communities Act would make sure that local planning decisions reflect these policies and reflect the public interest. The Ontario Liberals promised fundamental reforms to land use planning in Ontario, and today I'm here to deliver on that promise.

Eight years of eroding the public's role in deciding the future of its communities is over. We want to move quickly to ensure that legitimate local concerns cannot be brushed aside. The power to make important local decisions should be put back in the hands of communities. We want to put an end to the disorder in the land use planning process left to us by the previous government.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I wish to respond to this statement from our Minister of the Environment—I've just received it; it's titled Green Week. I will point out to the minister the importance of another not so much public relations as information-raising day, Earth Day, which is coming up next spring. I was involved in the first Earth Day in the early 1970s, as a teacher of environmental science. To this day, I and my colleagues continue to fight the fight, endeavouring not only to clean up our air, our land and our water but to ensure sustainability.

We as MPPs on all sides, as members of society and representing our society in Ontario, take responsibility. We have to focus; we have to have a mission, with respect to our natural environment, to protect the quality of that environment and to encourage conservation and cleanliness not only of water but of energy and other material resources, while at the same time continuing to do our best to clean up our air, our water and our land.

Certainly we, on this side of the House, envision an Ontario where human health, recreation and commerce—and industry, I might add—are sustained by clean air and by clean water and land. To fulfill this vision, all of us in this Legislature must continue to press this government to set clear policies, to set standards and rules to protect the environment, and to encourage conservation activities and sustainability within our social and economic climate in Ontario.

Certainly, along with monitoring the environment and enforcing these rules, it's incumbent on government to continue to look for more innovative approaches to complement the regulations and the continued hiring of additional staff, as we hear in this announcement today. We must look beyond solely an announcement on water

and solely an announcement about hiring more public servants. We must look beyond. We must consider building partnerships with communities, partnerships with industry, partnerships with organizations to find ever more flexible, practical and, I stress, cost-effective approaches and ways to strengthen not only environmental protection but also conservation. I remind this government, and I reinforce with this government, to continue in a direction to recognize that a healthy, natural environment is essential to the well-being of our families.

It's also essential to the ability of this province to attract investment and jobs. That was an approach that we indicated for the last eight and a half years. We as a society play an important role in making the province the best jurisdiction in North America. We're finding better, stronger and clearer environmental protection—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Barrett:** Are you saying I'm out of time?

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Yes

**Mr Barrett:** OK, I'll wrap up. I understood it would be a separate response to the other minister. I'll defer to the member opposite.

1410

#### LAND USE PLANNING

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Today we've received a wake-up call. We've received a wake-up call from this government in relation to making changes to the Planning Act.

I think one of the things that is critical in understanding even the word "planning" is that it requires decisions to be made with a long-term vision and a plan. I represent a community in part of York region, and 40,000 people move annually to York region. This requires long-term vision. It requires then a kind of legislative framework where one council that makes a decision is there and investors respond to that.

There may be a lag time before they are able to actually begin building. In the meantime, they can't be frustrated by the fact that they've made this investment. Now you have an objection of a problem that allows them to look at their options, and those have disappeared by this legislation. It doesn't make any sense.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** You have to ask permission.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** Mr Speaker—

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. I think there has to be a request for unanimous consent.

**Mr Prue:** Then I would so request, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do I have unanimous consent for a five-minute response?

**Mr Prue:** I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Toronto-Danforth. Could I have unanimous consent for her as well?

**The Speaker:** Agreed.

**Mr Prue:** Thank you.

Everyone in Ontario knows that the Ontario Municipal Board needs to be reformed. Everyone knows that it is an anachronistic symbol of times past. We would commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this initiative. It is in fact a small move in the right direction, and we are generally supportive of what is contained in this bill, if only it went just a little further.

We need to strengthen our municipal governments. That's what we really need to do. This will help in some small way to strengthen those governments. But what governments really need are their new sources of revenue; the power to do their own planning; the power to enforce their own laws of their own jurisdiction. We need to recognize throughout that municipalities are mature governments in the scheme of governance in Ontario and in the scheme of governance in Canada.

Having said that, the board needs to be circumscribed, because it has simply gone too far over the last number of years. I am mindful that the government is talking about increasing the time frames. That is a good idea. It has become increasingly impossible for many of the municipalities to meet time frames of 90 days or of meeting time frames which are less in things that are not official plan amendments. We welcome those changes.

There is a problem, though. I want to tell you that we do not see in this bill what needs to be addressed. We see a problem with patronage appointees continuing to be appointed to the Ontario Municipal Board. It has been a problem for a long time, and we see that that problem will continue, because now the government has one of its own members chairing that particular board that is going to appoint people to the Ontario Municipal Board. We see a continuing problem, and it is in the government's bill that the governor in council will show provincial interest and will circumscribe what the municipalities want to do when and if they choose to exercise their own jurisdiction.

We continue to see a problem with the public consultations that have been promised, because to date in this new Legislature the committees of the government are stacked, of course, with Liberals, everything is time-allocated, and they are routinely ignoring the public input on every bill that has come forward to this date.

We continue to see a problem with the role of the Ontario Municipal Board and are mindful that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal made many speeches of simply getting rid of it altogether. We're looking to see something being done in that regard.

We continue to see problems where this government has talked about greenlands preservation and has gone ahead with development in the Oak Ridges moraine.

We continue to see problems with this government promising rural protection under the Ontario Municipal Board and it has flip-flopped on the whole issue of the Richmond landfill.

We continue to see problems, but the direction you are taking is an appropriate direction. We will work with you, but we expect much more in the future.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** It sounds as though I'll have many other opportunities throughout the rest of the week to respond to statements by the minister. I do want to say through you to her today that the announcement of 25 new water inspectors today just doesn't—

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** It's 33.

**Ms Churley:** Whatever. It doesn't even come close to what we need. I'm looking forward to hearing the minister announce tomorrow or the day after that they will be bringing back up to 500 of the over 750 staff that the previous government let go. I'm looking forward to hearing the announcement that the drastic cuts, beyond the bone, to the Ministry of the Environment, the ministry that had more cuts than any other, all be put back into that ministry. Those are the kinds of things we're going to be looking for, because tough new regulation, if it's coming, doesn't mean the paper it's printed on, as we learned from what the previous government did, when the front-line staff are not there to regulate, to inspect and make sure that people are actually obeying the law.

The other thing we'll be looking for is an absolute no to Adams mine. We will be looking for a solution to the whole Port Colborne situation. We will be looking for a real commitment, a strong commitment to those coal plants being shut down when promised. We'll be looking for announcements about preserving our forests. I'm looking forward to hearing all of these things later this week.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### ONTARIO ENERGY BOARD AMENDMENT ACT (ELECTRICITY PRICING), 2003

### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA COMMISSION DE L'ÉNERGIE DE L'ONTARIO (ÉTABLISSEMENT DU COÛT DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario à l'égard de l'établissement du coût de l'électricité.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1417 to 1422.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.



**Ayes**

Agostino, Dominic	Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard
Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peterson, Tim
Bentley, Christopher	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	

**The Speaker:** Those against, please rise.

**Nays**

Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Eves, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 65; the nays are 20.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent for each party represented in the House to have up to five minutes to congratulate coalition forces on the capture of Saddam Hussein.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent? I hear a no.

**ORAL QUESTIONS****PROVINCIAL DEFICIT**

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is to the Premier. During the recent election campaign, you consistently bragged that you would set aside \$2 billion to balance the projected deficit. What have you done with the \$2 billion?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member opposite for his question, but I can assure him that the question that weighs heavily on the minds of Ontarians is: What happened to the balanced budget? They were assured time and time again that the books were balanced, but as we have learned, not only to our dismay but to the dismay of Ontarians, what we've been left with

is a \$5.6-billion deficit. I would think that when it comes to the great issues of the day, the single most important question is: Where in the heck did that \$5.6-billion deficit come from?

**Mr Baird:** Premier, your government has introduced legislation to require cabinet ministers to attend question period and, if they don't, they're fined. Perhaps we need a piece of legislation to require cabinet ministers and the Premier to answer questions or they would be fined.

Again, Mr Premier, you consistently bragged during the recent election campaign, "Don't worry; be happy." You said that you could handle a \$2-billion deficit. Again, I want to ask the Premier: Where is that \$2 billion and shouldn't you apply it to the projected deficit today?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The member opposite knows that we have moved very aggressively with our plan not to proceed with some irresponsible tax cuts that this government had planned to proceed with. We're not going ahead with the corporate tax cut; we're not going ahead with the private school tax credit; we're not going ahead with mortgage interest deductibility; we're not going ahead with the seniors' property tax credit. Those are irresponsible tax cuts.

What we are doing, given the circumstances that we have found, is acting responsibly, something that government failed to do for the last eight and a half years.

**Mr Baird:** As Paula Todd said to you on September 19, "No, no, no." You've already told them that that money is going to health care and education. On September 30, you said, "As you know, we've accounted for a \$2-billion deficit." After the election, on October 3, you went further and said, "We've accounted for a \$2-billion deficit."

Stand in your place, Premier, and answer the question: Where is that \$2 billion and why won't you put it against the projected deficit this year?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** It's not just the \$5.6-billion deficit, either. We seem to find, on an almost daily basis, evidence of further irresponsibility on the part of this government, whether we're talking about \$800 million in accumulated hospital deficits or \$25 million for the children's aid society. We've discovered something, which the Minister of Energy will be speaking to shortly, with respect to what's happening—the real story—over at OPG.

What we are doing, for the first time, is changing the direction of government. We're going to act in a responsible way, we're going to live within our means and we're going to move ahead on our commitments.

1430

**Mr Baird:** Premier, I have in my hand a copy of the Liberal economic plan. In your plan you clearly promised the people of Ontario a balanced budget. You asked David Hall, a former senior economist with the Bank of Montreal, to both certify and verify your numbers. In his assessment, which you proudly reproduce in your plan, he says that you've set aside not \$2 billion but \$3 billion to deal with the financial challenges of the province. Premier, where is that \$3 billion?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The people of Ontario have now had a good opportunity to fully assess the state of the books left by the previous government. We've had Mr Peters provide us with an independent, objective report as to where we stand when it comes to government finances. The fact of the matter is we have been left with a \$5.6-billion deficit. That is the single most important figure that continues to weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians.

Again I say to the member opposite, why is it that throughout an entire campaign period, notwithstanding which representative of the government spoke on behalf of the government, each and every candidate, each and every member of the government, maintained that the books were balanced and that we had no deficit whatsoever, but at the end of the day we discovered there was a \$5.6-billion deficit?

**Mr Baird:** Premier, you're not the Leader of the Opposition; you're in government. You get the car and driver; you get the corner office. Question period is the opportunity for you to answer for your campaign commitments. You and your government are continuing to play politics with the projected deficit.

Let's look at what your man, David Hall, is now saying. On November 15 he said, "What I said was that the Liberal financial plan was enough to turn a \$2-billion deficit into zero." Further, in his words, "Arguably, it could turn a \$5-billion deficit into \$3 billion."

You should stand in your place and tell this House, is your man David Hall wrong?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I want to take this opportunity to assure you, the members opposite and the people of Ontario that we are doing everything within our power to get our fiscal house in order and clean up the mess left to us by the previous government.

We are being straight with the people of Ontario. We have been saddled with a \$5.6-billion deficit. It is not something we sought, you understand, but it is something we are coming to terms with, something we're going to tackle. We're going to face our challenges head-on, we're going to do the right thing and we're going to act responsibly, given the circumstances as they've left those to us.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, you appear to be prepared to say you'll do anything except stand in your place and answer a direct question.

This is the Liberal plan. These are your numbers. David Hall is your expert. You promised a balanced budget. You promised to budget \$3 billion against a projected deficit. You are standing in your place, but you won't answer the question. This Liberal financial plan is worthless. It's not worth the paper it's printed on.

Premier, will you stand in your place and tell us what you've done with this \$3 billion, or is it another example of a billion-dollar boondoggle brought to you by the Liberal Party?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I appreciate the Mulroneyesque theatrics, and I would remind the member opposite where that kind of approach brought Mr Mulroney.

We are now, collectively as a province, confronted with a substantial deficit. But, as I said, it gets worse than that. We are now discovering on a fairly consistent basis that there is still more trouble beyond that particular deficit, whether we're talking about our hospital deficits, whether we're talking about what has been left over at the children's aid society or whether we talk about the real story behind what's been happening over at Ontario Power Generation.

I want to say to the member opposite and the members of the government, but more importantly to the people of Ontario, that we are rolling up our sleeves. We will not shrink from our responsibility when it comes to dealing with this deficit. We're going to work as hard as we can to put our fiscal house in order and create a strong economy and a caring society.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question.

**Mr Baird:** Again to the Premier, the time for playing politics with the Ontario economy is over. Your bogus deficit, your phony blame game, is starting to have a real effect on the province's economy. Let's look at what John Williamson, your friend at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, is saying: "The Liberal government has overplayed its hand." The government has talked up the deficit but has done little to deal with it.

John Williamson last week said that any deficit above \$600 million is a Liberal deficit. He said that the Liberals have already demonstrated their ability to raise taxes, but taxpayers wonder if they are equally capable of controlling spending.

Premier, will you stand in your place, do the right thing and take that \$2 billion and \$1 billion that you promised, that you budgeted for, and put it against the financial challenge of the province? Would you do that, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I know the Minister of Finance is anxious to speak to this matter.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I'll tell you and the members of this House that I have a great deal of respect for my friend the head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. But, frankly, in that release his credibility slips several notches. What he did—inadvertently, I am sure—is bring in an additional \$2.1 billion on the revenue side when you incorporate the incorporation of electricity into our overall balance sheet. What he forgot to do was to bring in additional expenses of \$2.8 billion. That's his trouble. He needs to do his arithmetic more effectively before he puts out press releases of that sort.

**Mr Baird:** The verdict is in, Minister. Under your watch we've seen broken promises. We've seen the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. We've seen no strategy on job creation. This inaction, this attempt by you and your government to vilify the former government instead of taking your responsibilities and getting to work on balancing the budget, is having real consequences on the Ontario economy. In the first month with you at the helm, we have lost more than 7,000 jobs.

My question is to the Minister of Finance. Will he do the right thing? Will he finally begin to deal with the



projected deficit and send out a positive message to job creation and the Ontario economy?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** My friend talks about inaction. Has he been in this Parliament over the course of the past month? Right away we brought in a bill to start repairing our revenue base. That bill we hope will get third reading tomorrow. Today we have just given third reading to a bill dealing with hydro. We brought in a bill to change the Audit Act. We've repealed the education credit. We've repealed the seniors' education credit.

We are starting. I think this could be seen as one of the most activist sessions of this Parliament to get this province's financial house in order. You folks left a terrible mess. We've already begun to repair the damage.

1440

### TORONTO YOUTH ASSESSMENT CENTRE

**Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. As you know, the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy is authorized to protect the rights and interests of Ontario's children. It also seeks to ensure that children and youth in custody know and understand their rights and that those laws to protect them from abuse or harsh treatment are followed.

Minister, I understand that your office is in possession of the copy of the advocate's executive summary of the 2003 review on the Toronto Youth Assessment Centre. The advocate's office has identified a number of concerns in the area of peer-on-peer violence, staff-youth interactions and basic care. What is your ministry doing to address those concerns?

**Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services):** I want to thank the member for London North Centre for her question. I too share the concerns about what is happening at the Toronto Youth Assessment Centre, referred to as TYAC. It's in Mimico. It's an area that is of concern; it has been of concern to the child advocate. As a matter of fact, the child advocate issued a report to the former government in 2000, complaining about the facilities that are there. I am committed to safe, secure, humane treatment for the young people who are in our correctional services. I have met with the child advocate, I understand her concerns and I share those concerns.

I want to assure the member and the House that we will review the situation there. I've called on my officials to report back to me within three weeks as to how we can address those issues. The Dalton McGuinty government is committed to a seamless youth correctional facility that serves the needs of both the citizens of Ontario and those people who are in our institutions.

**Ms Matthews:** I look forward to your report, but the report determines that the only reasonable conclusion is to close the centre and transfer the youths to facilities that ensure their safety and a respectful, rehabilitative environment. What are you going to do about the advocate

calling on the government to close the Toronto Youth Assessment Centre?

**Hon Mr Kwinter:** The facility was opened in 1998. It was a facility that's on the same site as the Mimico adult correctional facility. It is totally, totally unsuitable for youth. I understand that. I have visited the facility, I've seen what is there, and we are committed to changing it. You can't build a new facility overnight. We are looking at the greater Toronto area youth centre. We have the plans in the works, and subject to fiscal constraints, obviously, we are determined to replace that facility and make sure that the facility we put in place will serve the needs of youth.

### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is to the Minister of Children's Services, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. It's your job to be an advocate for multiculturalism around the cabinet table. It's your job to be a spokesperson for children. During the recent election campaign, you made a commitment to scrap the equity in education tax credit.

Last week, we had hearings in this place. Let's look at what some of the presenters said. Simon Rosenblum, the director of public policy for the Canadian Jewish Congress, said that to cancel the equity in education tax credit "in such a retroactive manner seems to us most unfair and mean spirited." Bernie Farber, the executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, said to cancel it "so retroactively was like a bully punching us in the stomach."

Would you stand in your place and tell us that you'll fight for the Jewish community in Ontario?

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I thank the honourable member for the question, and I thank him for the opportunity to remind the public of what he did to those same groups during the last campaign, when he had the immigration policy under the crime platform.

We did have scrapping this tax credit for the private schools on our campaign platform, and we won a majority government based on it. The people have spoken. I am very close with many of the groups that you speak of, and they are not all in agreement with this critic, and the election results showed that. I find it very interesting that you would stand up and talk about immigration after the disgraceful way you treated the ethnic groups in this province for cheap political points during the last campaign.

**Mr Baird:** Again, every day another broken Liberal promise, and every day in question period no answers to reasonable questions. It's not just these groups, I say to the minister opposite. Let's look at what Muhammad Khalid, the education director of the Islamic Society of North America, said to the committee. He said that your decision to retroactively cancel the credit "is going to create mistrust of governments, and it is extremely unjust."

Let's look at what Toni Silberman, the chair of the League for Human Rights of B'Nai Brith Canada said: "Such an act can only be described as unjustifiably punitive to those who have made their family budgets and financial commitments contingent on receiving this credit."

Minister, families have made financial decisions. This small amount of money—\$1,400 a child—may not be a lot for you and I, but it's a lot for working families in Ontario. Your campaign spoke of no commitment to do this retroactively. You're not raising corporate taxes retroactively and you're not raising personal income taxes retroactively—it's bad public policy. Would you stand up for minority communities in this province, would you stand up for children and working families and say you'll reverse this punitive tax measure?

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** The majority of children from those communities attend public schools, and I will make no apologies for supporting our public school system.

Let me tell you some of the things I heard during the election campaign from people who said, "My parents came years ago, and we are insulted by the Tory government's statements on immigration and on their crime platform." I can get you lists and lists of quotes from those people as well.

**Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton):** Answer the question.

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** I answered the question, sir.

The public system deserves our support. We ran on it clearly, and we won the election. Get over it, member.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Will the government side come to order.

## LANDFILL

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** My question today is to the Attorney General. Dalton McGuinty committed during the election to drop the court appeal launched by the last government regarding the proposed Richmond landfill expansion. Leona Dombrowsky, the Minister of the Environment, delivered on this promise almost immediately after being sworn in. Subsequent to this, you served notice on the court of your intention to have intervener status. Would you clarify for my constituents the purpose and intent of your ministry becoming involved in this court case?

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** The member for Prince Edward-Hastings is correct. The government inherited a number of legal matters—a number of decisions—and independent judgments have to be made as to how to proceed with each of them. The judgment in this case was to abandon the appeal, and the Minister of the Environment, Leona Dombrowsky, did just that.

A separate appeal proceeded, brought by Canadian Waste Services Inc. In that, the appellate decision is

going to consider the general legal principle as to ministerial discretion; namely, whether a court should give deference to a decision made by a minister, and the scope of the minister's discretionary authority. That's a general legal principle and has wide-ranging impacts on all ministries, on this government and on future governments. In the ordinary course of business, the Attorney General would make submissions in this regard. We're doing that through intervener status, so we can address those issues. But let me be very clear: The government has abandoned the appeal, period.

**Mr Parsons:** The need for megadumps such as this exists partially because the previous government eliminated all provincial support for blue box recycling and waste diversion. As a result, Ontario now has the lowest recycling rate in Canada. Ontario diverts only 25% of its waste, despite the Harris guarantee to reach 50% by the year 2000. Edmonton and Halifax both divert over 65% of their waste.

Minister, what will be done to boost waste diversion and lower the pressure for new landfills?

**Hon Mr Bryant:** The Minister of the Environment will want to answer this question.

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** I'm always very happy to restate this government's commitment to assisting municipalities in reaching a 60% diversion rate.

I stated earlier today in the Legislature that we are committed to protecting our environment, that we are also committed to returning to a place in Canada where we set an example instead of being the worst example, the worst polluter. We are going to bring forward policies that other provinces will be able to look at with respect and begin to emulate once again. That left us in the last eight years. We intend to return that.

1450

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier. Earlier today you said, and I quote, "We are rolling up our sleeves." That's in regard to dealing with the deficit. I'd like to ask you, Premier, since you have been elected, have you at any time given directions to your Minister of Finance and to the ministers in your cabinet to bring in a plan that would balance the budget by March 31, 2004?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know the Chair of Management Board wants to speak to this.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** I want to assure the people of Ontario that literally the day I was appointed to cabinet, the Premier instructed me to go back to the Management Board and begin getting the fiscal house in order. We immediately put a freeze on discretionary spending; a freeze on hiring; we held back about a billion dollars of expenditures; we introduced advertising legislation to



prohibit the sort of abuse we found on spending money just last week.

I want to tell the people of Ontario that every day, as we're trying to deal with that, we find these surprises: \$800 million of hospital spending, borrowed money from previous years, children's aid societies having to borrow \$25 million, hospitals running deficits of \$400 million—literally a billion dollars of spending not on the books.

We've rolled up our sleeves, but we're dealing with a mess that had been left here by the previous government. We'll deal with it, but I want the people of Ontario to know that the mess we've got is extremely challenging in these tough economic and fiscal times.

**Mr Klees:** I find the answer evasive, as always. My question was very specific: Did the Premier, at any time since he took on his role as Premier—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Please allow the member for Oak Ridges to ask his question.

**Mr Klees:** My question was very specific: Did the Premier, at any time since his election, give direction to his Minister of Finance and members of cabinet to get to work and bring in a balanced budget by the end of the fiscal year—yes or no? The people of this province deserve to know what your marching orders were to your Minister of Finance.

**Hon Mr Phillips:** I repeat again to the people of Ontario, as soon as I was appointed by the Premier, he instructed me to begin action on dealing with a \$5.6-billion mess that was left by the previous government. I outlined for the House and for the people of Ontario that I took those five specific steps. I would tell the people of Ontario that we are being very firm on not approving any expenditures going forward. I would say to the people of Ontario, here's what we're dealing with: \$5.6-billion of mess. The hydro situation: far worse than anyone had ever dreamed possible.

Under the direction of my Premier, we will aggressively deal with the fiscal situation that we have found. We will solve the problem, but I just want to tell the people of Ontario once again that we have inherited an enormous mess from the previous government, much of it completely hidden from the public.

#### CONTAMINATION IN PORT COLBORNE

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** My question is to the Premier, a very important question about people's health and the environment. A new study revealed startling news about health problems faced by the people of Port Colborne. As you know, Inco has polluted that town with nickel, lead and other toxins. We've been raising it with the previous government.

The report found high rates of acute respiratory infections, asthma, kidney and bladder problems, elevated coronary artery disease and circulatory problems. We pressured the previous government into promising swift action if this study found evidence of health problems. They have, but we talked to the people of Port

Colborne, and they told us that your government told them you're too busy to help them until next spring. I want to ask why you are making the people of Port Colborne wait until spring. Why don't you start helping them immediately?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I know the Minister of the Environment would like to speak to this.

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** I am aware of the situation in Port Colborne. Representatives from the Ministry of the Environment have had an opportunity to review the community health assessment project. We continue to work with local health unit officials, as well as Inco, to ensure that the safety of the people in that community and the environment are managed to the very best of our ability.

We certainly appreciate the concerns that have been raised by the people, and we are doing all we can, in our power, to work with all the agencies to ensure that the safety of the community is put first.

**Ms Churley:** Minister, the people in Port Colborne said they were told that your government is too busy to deal with this until spring. The people of Port Colborne are paying for years of pollution with their health. Dr David Pengally, professor at McMaster University in Hamilton, said: "The hospitalization rates are high, and not just a little bit high. They are well over 50% higher than the rest of the province."

The people of Port Colborne can't wait. They need your help now. This is the next step, Minister, and I want you to say you'll start right away. Case by case studies will uncover exactly who is at risk and how to protect them. Don't make them wait until spring. Roll up your sleeves and get to work to help these people today. Will you do that, Minister?

**Hon Mrs Dombrowsky:** That the member opposite would say the people have told her this is one thing. I would invite them to contact me directly. I would very much like to have an opportunity to deal with them personally on this issue. Again, it's a file I have been briefed on. I am aware that members of the Ministry of the Environment, the health unit and the company, Inco, have been working to address this very serious health issue at Port Colborne.

#### BIRTH CERTIFICATES

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is for the Minister Consumer and Business Services. Serious concerns have been raised about the security of the birth certificate system in Ontario. Our Premier, then-opposition leader Dalton McGuinty, raised this issue to the government's attention in the fall of 2001. His warnings were ignored by the previous Conservative government, and problems still exist within the system.

Last year, we all recall that more than 500 blank birth certificates were stolen, and the action of the previous government was to simply try to keep that information away from the public as a way of trying to deal with the embarrassment of what happened.



Minister, I know you take this issue seriously, and we know that birth certificates are extremely important documents. Can you tell us what steps have been taken to the tighten security of birth certificates in Ontario and what steps you will take?

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** Obviously the security and safety of birth certificates is an important issue with our ministry. As a result of recent concerns that have been raised about the security and safety of those birth certificates, we contacted Mr Norman Inkster, the safety and security adviser for our ministry and for the office of the registrar general. Mr Inkster sent me a note today and indicated: "In my opinion, the staff and executives of the office of the registrar general continue to take a very serious and professional approach to addressing issues of security."

Regrettably, the previous government was warned as far back as December 2002 that same-day service—issuing certificates on the same day—does continue to pose a threat. He says: "In previous reports, I've taken the position that the provision of same-day services for the issuance of base documents such as birth certificates is unwise and poses an unnecessary risk."

The previous government regrettably ignored that advice, and I'm pleased to report that, effective at the end of the business day today, we will cease offering same-day service. We will still provide a high quality of service, but we're not confident that same-day service can ensure the safety and security of the birth certificate system.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Tories bad, blah, blah, blah.

1500

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Member from Nepean-Carleton, I don't appreciate the nagging and bickering that goes across. Will you refrain from that, please? Supplementary.

**Mr Agostino:** I'm pleased that the minister has already taken steps to try to deal with this problem. Minister, as we know, the previous government ignored a number of warnings on public safety, from water to energy. There were warnings about the security around blank birth certificates. We know about the 500 that were stolen that the government tried to keep from the public.

Our birth certificates must be secure from identity thieves or potential terrorists. Birth certificates are often a gateway to other documents that have become very valuable to people who want to use them for criminal activity. It is your responsibility, Minister, to ensure that these important documents are secure and are going to the right hands. What steps have you taken, and can you assure us that our birth certificates in Ontario are safe today, ensuring that they do not get into the wrong hands and only into the hands of people who deserve them and who should rightly get them?

**Hon Mr Watson:** We have one of the most secure birth certificate registry systems in Canada, if not North America. Our staff does a very thorough and very diligent job at ensuring that people who come in and

apply for a birth certificate are in fact the individuals who appear on the birth certificate itself. So I have great confidence in the system. You can't simply walk into the office of the Registrar General and ask for a birth certificate; you have to fill out the proper forms, and we have to verify those forms against the information we have in the registry.

So I have great confidence in the system, but I don't believe it's fair, in this day and age of concern over security, that we simply have a same-day service. It puts too much pressure on the staff and on the system, and it doesn't give us enough time to ensure the proper checks and balances in issuing a birth certificate.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I direct my question again to the Premier, and it goes to the heart of what I believe is really a credibility deficit that's developing in this province at the foot of his government. I asked a very specific question, and I believe the people of Ontario really deserve to know the answer. They want to know whether or not you, as Premier, felt it important to balance the budget by the end of the fiscal year as, by the way, you had promised. You had made that promise in the election campaign.

On two occasions, I asked a specific question as to whether or not you had directed your finance minister to bring in a balanced budget. You refused to answer that. I'm going to ask you one more time: Did you or did you not instruct your finance minister to bring in a balanced budget, to do the heavy lifting, to do what had to be done, to make the cuts that perhaps had to be made, but to honour a commitment to balance the budget? Did you or did you not?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I think the Minister of Finance would like to speak to this.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I guess I should just tell my friend from Oak Ridges that I invite him to be here in a couple of days when I will be presenting a fall economic statement and addressing the question that he asked in greater detail.

But let me tell him that he was part of a government that so misconstrued the real financial circumstances of this province, details of which—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Could you withdraw that?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** If you want me to withdraw the word "misconstrue," I'll withdraw that. They represented the financial circumstances of this province in a creative way. I will tell him that we've rolled up our sleeves, that we're examining every way possible to get this province's financial house in order, and we will do that.

**Mr Klees:** I am absolutely certain, Speaker, that you share my frustration and the frustration of every Ontarian at the Premier's unwillingness to answer the simplest of questions. He has to refer to the finance minister for a question the finance minister simply can't answer, and



that is whether the Premier—and this question I'll direct back to the Premier. Did the Premier instruct his cabinet and his finance minister to go to work and bring in a balanced budget by the end of the fiscal year, yes or no? This is to the Premier, not the finance minister: Did he?

**Interjection:** He's calling the shots.

**The Speaker:** Let me call the shots now and ask you to be quiet. Minister of Finance.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** If I wanted my friend from Oak Ridges to be privy to the discussions that the Premier and all of us have in cabinet, I would invite him to cross over to this side of the floor and then I would make strong arguments as to why he might be considered one day to participate in those discussions. But I would prefer not to.

I simply want to say to you, sir, that we are working diligently to get this province's financial house in order. Those folks over there took a unique approach to it: When they were running out of money, they'd sell an asset. They sold a \$10-billion highway for \$3 billion. That cost every taxpayer, every citizen of this province, \$7 billion, and that's just one of the mistakes. We're not going to make those sorts of mistakes.

#### AGRICULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** My first question in this House is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Last Thursday, you signed the agricultural policy framework with the federal government. Farmers in my riding of Perth-Middlesex have faced a number of challenges this year, as you are well aware. They are looking for assurances that they are getting a fair deal, which the former provincial government was unable or unwilling to give them. Minister, can you tell the farmers in my riding if you were able to get the key concessions Ontario farmers wanted by sitting down with the federal government to hammer out a deal?

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** I thank the member for Perth-Middlesex for the question. First and foremost, I think it's important that we thank the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council. Under the leadership of Mr John Gillespie, they were able to bring together the agricultural community in this province to deliver a clear and consistent message to me, as Minister of Agriculture and Food, that I could deliver to the federal minister.

The agricultural policy framework was very important, not only from the business management standpoint but for the environment, science and renewal, and food safety and quality. There are a number of positive areas that are going to benefit the agricultural community down the road. By negotiating in good faith with the federal government, we were able to ensure that we have a good deal for Ontario farmers, a deal that Ontario farmers support and a deal that I believe is going to benefit many other farmers across this province, because we made sure that we wanted to put the interests and the needs of Ontario's diverse agricultural community first.

*Interjections.*

1510

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** There is a supplementary to come from the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. Could I hear it, please?

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** Minister, the previous government wasted a lot of time playing the blame game. They were too busy pointing the finger at others to sit down and get to work at a good deal for the farmers.

Farmers in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh could not have waited much longer. The economic impacts of the mad cow scare, SARS, the blackout, the volatilities of crop pricing and other challenges left them in a vulnerable situation. For that reason, farmers are very happy to hear that a satisfactory agreement has finally been reached. Minister, will the agricultural policy framework benefit farmers in my riding who are still coping with economic challenges?

**Hon Mr Peters:** Some of the concessions that we were able to negotiate, as I said earlier, are going to benefit all the farmers. First and foremost is a one-year review of the program. Initially, the federal government only wanted to have a three-year review.

As well, and this is an issue that's going to help many in the industry right now, was the inclusion of negative margins. Negative margin coverage was very important to the agricultural community. As well, we're going to continue to deliver the companion programs in this province for a further three years. We have the commitment from the federal government that programs like market revenue and self-directed risk management are going to be reviewed. And as well, we were able to reduce the amount of the caps. The caps that existed within the program have been increased and, as well as putting the coverage in, instead of the farmers, we were able to include a letter of credit that the farmers are going to be able to use.

These are definite advantages to the farmers of Ontario, and I want to again thank the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council for their good work at making sure that Ontario's farmers' message is delivered.

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question, once again, is to the Premier. The fact of the matter is, it should not have been a surprise to the Premier or his cabinet that there were challenges in the province of Ontario. There was SARS, West Nile, mad cow and we had an electricity blackout that affected the entire north-western seaboard.

The fact of the matter is that our government had given its marching orders to every cabinet minister to look at program review and to bring in a balanced budget by the end of the year. Once again, we were prepared to do what it took, in spite of those fiscal challenges that the province had to bring in a balanced budget by the end of the fiscal year. Did the Premier or did he not direct his cabinet to bring in a balanced budget by the end of fiscal

year 2003? Yes or no, Premier, and why won't you answer that question?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I simply can no longer resist the overtures. Let me say this. I'm not going to divulge the contents of the upcoming budget. I'm not going to divulge the contents of the statement to be delivered later in the week by the Minister of Finance. But I can tell you this, and I can provide this assurance to the people of Ontario. We will not gut public services. We will not sell off the furniture to pay for groceries. We're going to move in a progressive and responsible way to clean up the mess left to us by my friend and his colleagues.

**Mr Klees:** I take that to mean that the Premier is not interested in balancing the budget, that the Premier has, in fact, given direction to his cabinet colleagues to do whatever it takes to build up a phony budget so that he can continue to do what it takes to meet special interest needs without addressing the fiscal issues in this province. It's a sad day in the province of Ontario, but at least we have an answer to the question that I put earlier. How can he justify that?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Could you allow the member from Oak Ridges to ask his question?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Both sides. Order.

**Mr Klees:** My question is quite straightforward. How can the Premier of this province justify not asking his finance minister and members of the cabinet to do what it takes to bring in a balanced budget for the province of Ontario? How can he justify that?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** As my finance minister mentioned, I'm not going to make the member opposite privy to confidential cabinet discussions, but I can provide the following assurances to Ontario families. We will not endanger their health by firing water inspectors. We will not endanger their health by laying off meat inspectors. I can tell you that at all times, we will keep first and foremost in our minds the public interest, the interests of our families. And they've given us very specific marching orders. There's no doubt about that whatsoever. They want better schools, they want better health care, they want a safe and cleaner environment, they want a more productive economy and they want us to live within our means. We intend to do just that.

## SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland):** My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, last week this government announced a moratorium on the closure of rural schools. In my riding of Northumberland, five schools have been slated to be closed by the previous government's funding formula: Smithfield Public School, South Cramahe Public School, Castleton Public School, North Hope Central Public School and Dr L.B. Powers Public School. They're very important schools in my riding, and there are five of them.

The students who attend these schools, their parents, their teachers, and the support staff who work there are understandably anxious to hear about their future. Minister, can you tell the residents of my community what the moratorium means to them and to their kids?

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** I appreciate the member's question. Up until very recently, the view taken by the old government in Ontario was that a school was just a building, that it was a number of square feet per student. It didn't take into account what that school, what those parents committed to their sons' and daughters' education, what the teachers, what the principal had to offer by way of a good education. So we have decided to redefine schools to make sure that good schools can be taken into account, that good schools aren't shut down for the wrong reasons.

There was an obsession by the previous government to have real estate come into the hands of public authorities and less consideration for what schools did for the students, first of all, and for the communities. We'll be making revisions to that, in consultation with our board partners, and I can tell you that the announcement we made has been very positively received because people want to work together on behalf of students, and finally they have a government willing to do that.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Supplementary?

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** Minister, students, parents, communities and schools in northern Ontario face unique challenges. Northern schools and northern communities generally have smaller student populations and great distances between schools and communities. Because they are smaller, too often northern schools receive fewer resources, less support for students at risk and fewer staff. Closing schools just makes the problem worse.

Over the past few years we have faced prospective school closures in places like Assiginack, Webbwood, Desbarats and other communities across Algoma-Manitoulin. Minister, what does your announcement mean for northern schools and northern boards?

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** Thank you for the supplemental. What it means for northern schools and what it means for inner-city schools and rural schools that, up to now, have had big bull's eyes painted on their roofs, is that they're going to be considered for their educational value. They're also going to be considered on behalf of not only what they do for children but in terms of value they play in the overall plan that we have.

Some of the best-scoring schools in the province in reading, writing and math have been shut down under the awkward and badly planned decisions of the previous government. We're not saying to the member that no school can be closed down; we're saying that schools can only be closed for good reasons. They have to benefit the students who go to that school. We will have a funding formula, policies and guidelines that will fit the students of this province rather than the other way around.

Previously, the students of this province had to fit, as one grade 7 student said, an approach by this funny-



Conservative Soviet politburo that was one-size-fits-all that fit none. Now we will have policies customized for success for all the students, whom we have great ambition for in the province.

1520

#### MID-PENINSULA HIGHWAY

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I ask the Minister of Transportation to give the assembly the date when he'll be submitting the EA terms of reference to the Ministry of Environment for the mid-peninsula corridor.

**Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** I want to thank the member for his question. I will not be able to give him the exact date, but we are proceeding ahead with the full environmental assessment.

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate the minister's answer and congratulate him on this important portfolio. I think the minister knows that this is probably the most important infrastructure project in the Niagara Peninsula in a generation. It will be an artery for investment in trade and tourism through southern and western Niagara.

I'm concerned that the minister and his government are not fully committed; in fact, they're slamming the brakes on the mid-peninsula corridor. In fact, three of their candidates in the last election—Mr Fuller, Mr Sullivan and Mr McMeekin—have all called for studies of alternatives to the mid-peninsula corridor, whether the need is there. In fact, Dalton McGuinty himself at one point said, "We want to look at alternatives."

That work was already done back in 2001. The report was done. According to an MTO-sponsored Web site, the following work has been completed: the Niagara Peninsula transportation needs assessment, the EA study design needs assessment review, public consultation and other reports. Will you give the House your undertaking that you will not repeat any of the work already done, proceed to the next step and submit the EA terms of reference—no repeating the work that's already been done?

**Hon Mr Takhar:** Actually, I have been on the record in this House saying that we realize the importance of this project. We are going to move ahead with this project. What we first want to make sure is that we assess all the impacts of this project, and that's exactly what we're going to do. I may ask this member, why didn't they move ahead with this project when they were in power?

#### GRIDLOCK

**Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale):** My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. In a recent national survey, Steeles Avenue had the dubious distinction of being named the worst municipal roadway in Ontario and in Canada. In fact, Steeles Avenue turns up twice on the list of 20 of the province's worst roadways: in first place, the Yonge-Bathurst stretch, and in 10th, the Vaughan-Brampton-Milton stretch.

Steeles Avenue is a major artery for residents of the riding of Willowdale as well as for commuters throughout the GTA. It's congested, it's poorly maintained, drivers are frustrated and serious fatal accidents occur. The GTA has many, many streets like this. Steeles Avenue just happens to be the worst. What is the government going to do to fight traffic congestion on Steeles Avenue to ensure that the constituents of Willowdale and all GTA residents can commute downtown and north of the city in a reasonable amount of time and in safety?

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** I think the member points out one of the problems we have: a specific gridlock hot spot on Steeles Avenue. Of course, we're going to take that into account as we move forward with our planning a coordinated approach. It is high time we took a comprehensive view of traffic and of gridlock, especially here in the GTA. That's why we are bringing together the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. The way things had been done previously just wasn't working. A patchwork of solutions to these problems, both road and transit, is not the way to go. Our approach is to do it on a comprehensive basis. Looking at specific hot spots like Steeles Avenue will certainly form one of the cores that we're going to be moving in.

**Mr Zimmer:** The problem gets worse; it gets worse daily. The Eves government eliminated all public provincial support for public transit in 1988. The situation has gone downhill drastically since then. A study by York region found that commuting times have increased 50% to 60% since then. Without major changes by 2011, a trip from downtown Toronto to the edge of the city will take an estimated 70 minutes. That's longer than it takes to get to Kitchener, Barrie or Port Hope.

Time spent idling in traffic adds up. Gridlock costs the GTA \$2 billion a year in lost productivity. Workers stuck in traffic means our economy suffers. How can we alleviate that drain on our economy so that we can deal with the \$5.6-billion deficit and give the constituents the quality of service and the road safety they deserve?

**Hon Mr Caplan:** I can tell the member that this government is going to help to turn things around. For starters, we're going to increase investments in transit, as we said we would during the campaign, by allocating two cents of existing gasoline tax toward transit. This represents a significant investment in our public transit systems, and we are looking at details related to how and when these funds will begin to flow to our transit partners.

The challenge is to make this commitment while at the same time developing a plan to dig our government out of the hole left to us by the previous government. We're going to get our finances healthy once again. We're going to invest more in transit and roads. We're going to take a comprehensive approach to dealing with this province. We finally have a government in Ontario determined to tackle the problem of gridlock.

## EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier, and it relates to the campaigning during the last provincial election; namely, that they were going to do government differently, that it was going to be open, that it was going to be transparent, that they would listen to people. The fact of the matter is that we have just come through hearings at which many, many people made presentations to the standing committee relating to the retroactivity of claiming back the tax credit for education.

I want to ask the Premier, does he believe that the people who were coming forward saying this is going to impose hardship on people of average income and even low income were telling the truth, and if so, how does he justify clawing back money retroactively from people who are investing in their children's education? How does he justify that? Were these people telling the truth or not?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** As we've mentioned before, our concern on this side of the House is those schools where some 96% of Ontario children are going day in and day out. We're concerned about the fact that those kids are in classes that are simply too large. We concerned about the fact that there's a demoralized teaching complement today. We're concerned by the fact that there are thousands and thousands of kids who are on waiting lists for their special-education needs. Those are our concerns on this side of the House. I understand the member opposite's concerns. We are first and foremost for better public education for all our children.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Sorry, that's the end of question period.

## PETITIONS

## SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I have a petition signed by parents at Seneca Unity School in Caledonia concerned about school closings.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Grand Erie District School Board has launched an accommodation study of the future of Caledonia's Seneca Unity Elementary School; and

"Whereas the Liberal leader has promised: 'A McGuinty government will put a moratorium on rural school closings until a fair funding formula is in place'; and

"Whereas Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty has promised: 'We will back that new formula with an additional \$177 million in funding for rural education';

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make good on the promise of a moratorium on school closures in Ontario until the fair funding formula is in place."

I sign this petition.

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION  
AND HYDRO ONE

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I have a petition, which I have signed and affixed my signature to. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows, and I'd like to read it into the record:

"Whereas the Epp report revealed the great extent of mismanagement that occurred at Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. This mismanagement took the form of massive cost overruns with respect to the Pickering nuclear power plant and extremely generous severance packages to members of the board of directors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce legislation that will ensure sound and fiscally responsible management of Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation."

I submit that today.

## LANDFILL

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of Site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario.

"We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of Site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I present this petition on their behalf.



1530

## CELL PHONES

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Please forgive me. My voice is failing me which is a shame, really.

"Whereas the safe operation of a motor vehicle requires undivided attention; and

"Whereas research has shown that the operation of devices such as cell phones distracts drivers' ability to respond and concentration on the task at hand; and

"Whereas close to two dozen government jurisdictions around the world have already passed legislation to restrict the use of cell phones while driving;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Legislative Assembly of Ontario enact legislation to curtail the use of hand-held cell phones as proposed in the private member's legislation introduced by John O'Toole, MPP for Durham."

I am pleased to endorse this as an endorsement of my legislation.

NATIONAL CHILD  
TAX BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I have a petition here from the city of Timmins that reads as follows:

"Stop the claw back: petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas one in five children in Ontario live in poverty;

"Whereas part of the national child tax benefit program the federal government gives as a supplement to low-income families across this country to begin to address child poverty;

"Whereas the money up to approximately \$100 a month per child is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life;

"Whereas in Ontario the Conservative government, and now the Liberal government, deducted the child benefit supplement dollar for dollar from those living on social assistance;

"Whereas this is leaving our province's neediest children without extra money they desperately need to begin to climb out of poverty;

"Whereas all children are entitled to a fair chance at life;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the provincial government of Ontario stop the claw back of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low income families in Ontario."

I sign that petition.

## LANDFILL

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at Site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received over a period time the necessary approvals for the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at Site 41; and

"Whereas part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of Site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of Site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario.

"We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of Site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'll sign my name to that.

## DIABETES TREATMENT

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I have a petition with over 1,000 names of people who are concerned about not having their OHIP coverage on all diabetes supplies.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas type 1 diabetes ... is one of the most costly, chronic auto-immune diseases of childhood that affects every organ system and one you never outgrow, people with type 1 diabetes must take insulin to live;

"Whereas insulin does not cure diabetes, nor does it prevent its eventual and devastating effects such as kidney failure, blindness, nerve damage, amputation, heart attack and stroke, those with type 1 diabetes must take multiple insulin injections daily and test their blood sugar by pricking their fingers for blood six or more times per day. A family with a child diagnosed with diabetes at age three will have estimated expenditures on

average of \$3,600 annually and well over \$200,000 in a lifetime for insulin, syringes etc, and this expenditure is only for diabetic supplies, not for all health care needs;...

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"All diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan."

I also add my signature.

## LANDFILL

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):**

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received over a period of time the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario.

"We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of 41 and the nearby water sources."

I support and affix my name to this petition.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received over a period of time the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is the final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton Inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario.

"We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of 41 and the nearby water sources."

1540

## EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to read a petition with respect to the equity in education tax credit. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government respected the right of parents to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government passed a law providing parents with a tax credit for up to 50% of tuition to a maximum of \$3,500 once fully implemented; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now introduced a bill that will cancel this important tax credit that provides working-class parents with the ability to send their children to a school of their choice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To protect the equity in education tax credit and stop the Liberal tax hike bill from becoming law."

I sign my signature in support.

## TOBACCO TAX

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** This is a tobacco petition. Some 1,800 farmers came out for a



mass meeting Friday night. They're concerned about tobacco taxes.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide cigarettes and tobacco displays behind a curtain, and support a smoke-free Ontario;

"Whereas history has proven that increases in tobacco taxes cause increases in the smuggling trade for illegal black-market tobacco whose contents are neither regulated nor inspected; and

"Whereas forcing store owners to hide their tobacco displays unduly punishes both store owners and consumers for the purchase and marketing of what remains a legal product;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject the increase in tobacco taxes and the ban on the display of tobacco products, and protect the rights of consumers to purchase a legal, regulated product—tobacco."

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 11, 2003, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the throne speech debate, and I welcome the opportunity to respond to the government's first speech from the throne.

The speech from the throne in many years in this place has been set by tradition as a document that sets out the government's vision and plan for the future of the province of Ontario, let alone the first throne speech of any particular government, which really should outline its long-term objectives as to what it hopes to accomplish during its term.

Instead, what we saw this year was an 18-page apology for the government's plan to abandon virtually every one of its campaign commitments. There's a blatant attempt to blame its back-peddling, its lack of commitment, its lack of will, on the former administration, specifically on a deficit that it would like you and the people of Ontario, this province, to believe that it inherited from the previous government.

It is obviously from the throne speech that job one for this government is not hiring 8,000 more nurses; it's not capping class sizes at 20; it's not respecting balanced budget legislation; it's not about hiring 1,000 additional police officers—all of which receive scant, if any, mention in the throne speech itself.

Job one for the McGuinty Liberal government is political spins. It is trying to flim-flam the public on the deficit issue and trying to demonize the former adminis-

tration and hold them responsible for every problem that goes wrong, whether it's a snowstorm or something else.

The pride of place these projects have in the government's agenda is evident from the amount of attention these specific initiatives received in the throne speech itself. There were 18 double-spaced pages, and the term "inherited deficit" is used some 12 times. The term "deficit" is used 21 times, Mr Speaker. I would invite you and other people in the province of Ontario to compare that to the throne speech of 1995. The circumstances were quite similar: A party that had been out of power for 10 years was coming back into power, and in that case we were looking at a deficit of \$11.3 billion in that year alone; this was on successive deficits of in excess of \$10 billion for five years in a row. The word "deficit" was used exactly once. It was not about apologizing why we couldn't do what we promised the people of Ontario that we were going to do; it was about how we were going to get on with the job of doing it.

In the first five pages of this throne speech, there are no fewer than 10 negative allusions, aspersions or, some would say, distortions of the record of the former government. The reason for all this self-serving propagandizing is obvious in the rest of the speech. It is nothing less than an orchestrated climbdown from Liberal election promises. In retrospect, the Premier and his advisors should have spent less time reading and quoting Henry Thoreau and more time reading Lincoln, who once cautioned, "We must not promise what we ought not lest we be called upon to perform what we cannot."

With all the complaining, negativism and finger-pointing, it seems to me that our Liberal friends are behaving the same way in government that they behaved in opposition. You could do them a favour, Mr Speaker, and have them briefed on the results of the election. Hello, over there on the other side of the House. You actually won the election. Now why won't you get on with the job of governing? The job is to govern the province of Ontario, to keep the promises you made to the people of Ontario, to look ahead, to make tough decisions and to make difficult choices.

If you want to see how that approach has been done, you can look at the 1995 throne speech by the then newly elected PC government. Like this effort that Mr McGuinty and his government tabled, that throne speech was tabled by a government formed by a party, as I said, that had been in opposition for 10 years. Unlike Mr McGuinty, we did not enjoy the advantages of four successive balanced budgets, nor 1.1 million net new jobs created in the province in the preceding five years. We did not enjoy a strong economy, among the healthiest anywhere in the world, and we did not enjoy a competitive taxation system. Nor did we enjoy a health care system that had an additional \$11 billion spent on it and had gone from 35% to 48% of the provincial budget. Nor did we enjoy an education system like post-secondary education that just had \$3.1 billion in vested in infrastructure.

Rather, that government faced a growing debt load, an economy weakened by a severe recession, an out-of-

control balance sheet, one of the worst taxation systems in North America, a demoralized private sector and frightened investors. On top of it all, the 1995 Conservative government was committed to one of the most radical and aggressive reform agendas in the history of our province. Yet in 1995 the government did not shy away from those challenges in its determination to keep its commitments, and this was reflected in the speech from the throne. The 1995 throne speech noted that it "could have been among the shortest in Ontario's history. The agenda is already clear, and it might suffice to say simply, 'Your government is doing what it said it would do, and it will continue'" to do so.

The 1995 speech stated, "On June 8, the people of Ontario voted for major change. The new government accepts that responsibility, and will deliver." Compare that to the language and sentiment of the 2003 contribution from this government. The language is full of qualifiers and excuses about the pace of change, about affordability, about sustainability; in other words, about every factor that the governing party wilfully ignored in making its election promises.

The most appalling and alarming statement in the entire throne speech is found at the bottom of page 5, where the government confesses, "This is not exactly the job your new government applied for," virtually an admission that they're not up to the job and it's a little too tough for them. That degree of naive self-pity is almost unbelievable. It's as if they thought they were going to Club Med and ended up in a boot camp somewhere. It sounds like they thought that governing this province was going to be easy. So what the heck? Go ahead and make 231 promises that cost billions of dollars we don't have; how tough can it be to govern the province? I think they're beginning to find out.

In the 1995 throne speech, the government of the day said that it was:

"Prepared to work hard.

"Prepared to give total commitment.

"Prepared to set priorities and stick to them.

"Prepared to lead by example."

1550

By comparison, the 2003 throne speech makes it clear the government is prepared to delay, prepared to postpone, prepared to abandon and prepared to ask others to adjust their expectations. In fact, the speech actually calls on the government's "partners in health care, education, and the broader public sector to temper their requests for more...." Strange that that party in opposition never once tempered their own demands for more for these very same partners. In fact, they did nothing to temper expectations on the campaign trail when they recklessly and irresponsibly made promises that inflated the expectations of every public sector stakeholder they could possibly find.

The Liberals are learning the truth of John Kennedy's observation that "Government is not a set of promises but a set of challenges." They're good at making promises, but it seems they are totally inept at meeting its challenges.

With respect to using the throne speech to set a clear agenda for action, the 2003 throne speech also suffers by comparison to past efforts. You simply have to go back to the May 2002 throne speech. For example, in that throne speech the government committed to the introduction of a multi-year base funding model for hospitals and school boards—done in the 2003 budget;

Review and reform the education funding formula, Dr Rozanski's report—done; in response to Rozanski, education funding was increased by \$895 million within the first 48 hours of the report being tabled, and a commitment made to exceed Dr Rozanski's recommendations of \$1.8 billion into public education;

Continue monitoring of textbook requirements on top of the \$65-million top-up of the money already annually paid for textbooks and learning resources—that was done specifically in response to a Rozanski recommendation of an additional \$66 million;

Additional support on top of the \$293 million already committed to help post-secondary institutions deal with the double cohort—that was done in the 2002 and 2003 budgets, and we financed the largest expansion ever of Ontario's post-secondary institutions: \$2.6 billion in capital and a multi-year increase in operating funding that would total \$3.1 billion by the fiscal year 2005-06;

Expansion of the Ontario Cancer Research Network—that was done in the 2003 budget—and an investment of \$1 billion in the Cancer Research Institute to eliminate the scourge of breast and prostate cancer.

Improve access to diagnostic treatment procedures—done. In the 2002 budget, 20 new MRIs and five new CTs were announced. Five of them were actually operational when the Liberals were elected to office. I'd invite people to compare that to the previous Liberal administration, from 1985 to 1990, which, in that entire five-year period of time, brought on five new machines.

Create a clean water Centre of Excellence in Walkerton—that was done and commissioned in the summer of 2003.

Additional resources to assist women and children at risk of violence and abuse—also done in the 2003 budget, which committed an additional \$31 million to victims' services and an additional \$164 million to children's aid societies.

These are examples of real commitment backed by real performance, not hollow promises backed by nothing but political spin. In 10 short weeks, this government is already famous for its no-can-do attitude. The government's most lasting contribution so far is the addition of the term "McGuintyisms" to the political lexicon, denoting an unkept campaign commitment.

The throne speech is nothing but a list of promises the government has broken and promises the government will be breaking. Ask this government to keep its commitment to live by the balanced budget law, it tells you, "You can't do that. You're going to have to change the law." The finance minister is more interested in inflating the deficit numbers to help pay off some of the special interest groups to which he appears to be indebted than



he is to actually getting down to work and balancing the books of Ontario.

No one is going to be ultimately fooled by this transparent political game, but the sad part of it is that it's the people of Ontario who will ultimately pay the price, not the government.

Ask this government to honour its commitment to hold the line on taxes, and it will tell that it can't do that either.

Seniors, working families, whom this party claims to have been very respectful of during the election campaign, seem to have been forgotten about since they ceased being a useful campaign slogan.

All job creators will pay more under this government. Think of the long-term impact that will ultimately have on, say, the automotive sector in this province or the agricultural sector, the second-largest economic generator in Ontario.

Ask this government to keep its promise number 71, to make sure the debt goes in only one direction—down—and what do you get? A whipped vote against the resolution introduced by my colleague, the member for Waterloo-Wellington, calling for the adoption of a 25-year debt retirement plan to make the province debt-free by 2029-30.

Ask this government about its commitment on a hard cap on class size—promise number 5 on the list of 231—and all you get is bafflegab. The Minister of Education, who is currently present in the House, appears to disagree with his own Premier. At least he's beginning to acknowledge that perhaps we can't keep this commitment. Perhaps it was ill advised in the first place. But the Premier is still sticking to the fact that he is going to have a hard cap of 20 students in every classroom in this province within his four-year period of time. It will only cost \$3.6 billion, but what's \$4 billion or \$5 billion? There is no mention whatever in the throne speech of this major component of the Liberal education policy. No matter how they intend to pay for any element of the policy, it is estimated this will cost at least \$3.5 billion to implement, not the \$1.6 billion they indicated it might cost.

Threatening board chairs who dare to publicly disagree with you on this policy issue is not the way to co-operate with educational partners. School boards will be looking to the government early in the new year for some signal on the amount of funding they will be receiving to hire new teachers, and they have been very disappointed in the throne speech.

What about promise number 214, to protect rural schools? The government apparently thinks you protect rural schools by press releases and political spin-doctoring. So far their protection consists of the Minister of Education issuing a press release calling for a moratorium on rural school closings until September 2004—no additional dollars to address the unique funding pressures, no new governance model. There are not a lot of rural schools in the minister's riding—I understand that—which might explain his unfamiliarity with the subject. Compare that to what we were doing: imple-

mentation of recommendations of the Rozanski report, including recommendations of special benefits to small rural schools; \$20 million in additional transportation funding; \$140 million in funding to support school renovations; and education supports in small rural and northern schools. We commissioned the Downey report on small rural and remote schools. On the basis of this report, we provided an additional \$50 million annually to ensure that boards would be able to keep small rural and remote schools open—again, real commitment backed by real dollars, as opposed to a promise backed by a press release.

On health care, the throne speech offers nothing but platitudes. There is not a single mention, for instance, of promise number 133, to hire 8,000 more nurses in Ontario. There is no mention of the promise to increase the percentage of nurses working on a full-time basis, from 50% to 70%. The Liberal performance in this area will be benchmarked against our record: Since 1999, the previous government invested \$1.1 billion in nursing services alone. We committed to creating 12,000 new nursing positions and actually created 12,833—once again, real commitment, real performance, real results.

The throne speech was not a surprise to anyone who understands the real agenda of this government, but it must have been a disappointment to those who expected the government to actually deliver on some of its major campaign commitments. Instead they got nothing but rhetoric.

The government boasts about breaking down inter-provincial trade barriers that have been broken down by Premiers across this country since the early 1980s.

The government brags about increasing the minimum wage and then cancels tax cuts for the most modest income earners in Ontario. The net result will be less take-home pay by the people who receive minimum wage. Do they understand that? Why didn't you tell them that when you introduced your legislation? You're now going to prevent them from receiving the benefit of the Ontario tax reduction program, a program that has been in this province every year for decades and has resulted in over 800,000 taxpayers now no longer having to pay one cent of Ontario income tax. The very people of modest means whom you profess to be helping, you are now going to shaft by increasing their taxes retroactively. You're going to give them a few cents an hour over here, and you're going to yank more than that away in taxation. That's the truth. Why don't you have the guts to stand up and admit it in this House? Merry Christmas. I hope you're not on minimum wage.

**1600**

The government says it will treat seniors with respect and dignity, and then it claws back their existing property taxation credit. It even floats trial balloons about means testing seniors for the Ontario drug benefit plan.

It says it will take the first steps toward phasing out our coal-powered electricity generating plants. It does not mention, however, its campaign commitment to eliminate every single one of them in the province of Ontario by January 1, 2007. The people are watching this policy.



Environmentalists actually believe that you are going to do that, despite the fact that you know and your members of the select committee on this specific issue voted in favour of a report that said it couldn't practically or possibly be done before the year 2015. Why would you make a commitment that your own members on that committee know you couldn't possibly fulfill? Now you're turning around and deluding the people of Ontario. Fossil fuel plants generate 23% to 25% of all electricity in Ontario. If you're going to eliminate them all by December 31, 2006, where are you going to get the replacement of that 25% of Ontario's power? Do you just expect 25% of the people of this province to do without power? You're against nuclear energy. That's 40% of the generation capacity. So now we're up to 65% of the power generation capacity in Ontario. It's great for getting the environmentalist vote. Too bad you didn't tell them you never intended on delivering in the first place because it's totally impractical.

It committed to safety audits and anti-bullying programs, even though in opposition it voted against the Safe School Act. I understand our NDP friends have asked for an anti-bullying hotline number.

The moraine: Talking about the environment, we were talking about that a few moments ago. You knew very well, months and months before the provincial election campaign started, that Chris Hodgson, who was the then minister, who was out of this place for months before the election campaign started, had made an agreement with developers about the protection of the moraine. That agreement called—and you knew this—for 6,600 new homes to be built in certain parts of the Richmond Hill area.

Despite knowing that, your leader, several times, in fact even after the election, was still insisting that not one single—not 6,600 but not one—home would be allowed to be built on the moraine. He repeated that promise throughout the election campaign even though members of the media and others pointed out to him that it was a totally impossible commitment to deliver on. He even repeated it after the election.

So what do they do? Well, he's right, not one new home will be build; 5,700 new homes will be built on the moraine. He only broke that promise 5,700 times, and he added a minuscule amount of area to be protected and has given those same developers a licence to build thousands of new homes in the Seaton area of this province—that agreement from the government that professed, when they were on this side of the House, that you should make all these things public, make it open, make it transparent, let us see the agreement. Where's the agreement? Where's the commitment to principle?

This isn't the only area of people in the Ontario populace that has been somewhat deluded by the campaign promises made by this government. What about the people of northern Ontario? The people of northern Ontario were under the impression that as of January 1, 2004, all of northern Ontario was going to be a tax-free zone. Municipalities have been working with represen-

tatives of the provincial civil service at Queen's Park to draw up a list of new and diversification industries and businesses that could locate in various communities across northern Ontario. So what happens in the McGuinty government's throne speech? There's not one single word of that. They're not going to have a tax-free zone for northern Ontario, which would actually help northerners diversify their economy and stand on their own feet and have jobs for the young people; no, they're going to have numerous committees to offer advice and study things instead of having real change. Studded tires won't diversify the economy in northern Ontario, concrete taxation initiatives and incentives will.

What about tobacco farmers? What about the agricultural community? I can see that as a matter of public policy you might want to raise tobacco taxes. I can see that you might want to have that debate and that discussion. But surely if you're going to do that and that is your intention and you think this is in the best interests of Ontarians, at least you owe it to the people of the province of Ontario, and certainly owe it to tobacco farmers, to (a) talk about compensation and (b) talk about where those dollars raised from that tobacco tax are going. Are they actually going to help prevent cancer? Is that where every single one of those dollars is going, or is it going into the Treasurer's pocket in the consolidated revenue fund?

Another issue of public policy that I think is rather interesting is the whole issue of retroactive tax increases. I think this is a very, very serious matter of public policy that should be debated before implementing. The government certainly didn't run on retroactively increasing hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Ontario taxes.

#### *Interjection.*

**Mr Eves:** The Minister of Education is a little cranky about this, and well he might be; it would offend every single person who believes in a democratically elected government. Seniors and working families, whom they profess to have been working in favour of—parents who send their children to independent schools—are now going to have a retroactive tax increase. The last one I mentioned is probably the most startling. We have parents of modest income means. I heard the Premier in the House when we were talking about this a week or so ago, yelling about Upper Canada College. Well, I can say it's exactly that type of elitist fearmongering that really annoys people about partisan politics. The overwhelming majority of parents who send their children to independent schools, be they Christian schools, be they Muslim schools, be they Jewish day schools, and on and on, are people of very modest income means. They believe in a choice for their child's education, and they believe there should be a fair and level, equitable playing field. They have made decisions on sending their child, or children as the case may be, to independent schools, knowing what the law of the province of Ontario was and feeling that they could trust the government of Ontario to keep that law in place.

Although I don't happen to agree, I can see the government saying, "We want to change the direction." I



understand they campaigned on that. But to go back and retroactively increase taxes on those parents after they've already made those decisions about tuition is simply unconscionable. It is a terrible, terrible matter of public policy to retroactively increase anybody's taxes.

Related to that issue is the issue I mentioned a few moments ago, which is particularly galling, and that is the rates at which the most modest income earners in this province first start to pay income tax. There are already roughly 800,000 people, as I mentioned, who no longer pay a dime of Ontario income tax in this province, thanks to successive governments implementing the Ontario tax reduction policy.

To hit those people, who can least afford it, with a tax increase as of January 1, while you profess to be supporting them by minimally increasing the minimum wage, at the same time knowing you're going to take that and then some away from them is simply unconscionable. We have to continue to help the people at modest income levels in this province. For the life of me, I don't know why the Minister of Finance would choose to hit those people and take money away from them.

1610

A thousand new police officers—that was the campaign commitment. I didn't hear anything about it in the throne speech. There was a government that made a similar commitment in 1999 and delivered on that commitment within two and a half years. If you can't do it in two and a half years, at least you could give an indication of when you think you might be able to get around to keeping your campaign promise of 1,000 new police officers and when we can expect them. If you can't do it in two and half years, say it will take four years. We're waiting, and I'm sure thousands of law enforcement officers are waiting as well—the same with the commitment to 8,000 new nurses.

This government talks about a fiscal deficit. I don't think it's really a fiscal deficit we're looking at. But we do have a deficit in leadership, we certainly have a deficit in courage to make the tough choices necessary and we certainly have a deficit in commitment to keep Ontario's economy strong and to keep its taxation levels in this economy competitive. Even the current Prime Minister, Mr Martin, seems to understand that, but this government does not understand it. There's a deficit of imagination in the face of unique challenges. There's a deficit of accountability, expressed as a habit of rewriting the past to explain failures in the present and future. As I've said, the throne speech points to the most serious deficit of all, and that's a deficit of commitment on the part of the government, which clearly does not have the will to make the tough choices necessary to do the job.

What I see in this House every day and in the flurry of press releases we see is a government that is still entrenched in an opposition mentality. I would say to the government members over there, at least have the courage to debate, not to delay; have a positive commitment to change, not an excuse to abandon change; and please work hard at actually delivering for the people of Ontario, not at political spin-doctoring.

You may not pay the political price in the short term, but I'm here to tell you that in the long term the people of Ontario will not forget if you sell them short. The people of Ontario expect and deserve better than that. There are many difficult decisions you could make to improve the lives of Ontarians for many generations to come. Governing is not all about where we stand in the public opinion polls today. Governing is about making life better for about 12 million Ontarians and their children and grandchildren for many decades to come. So you may score some quick, short-term political hits, but I'm here to tell you, with 23 years experience in this place come next March, it is not going to do the people of Ontario, or quite frankly your own political aspirations, any good at the end of the day if you don't deliver on the commitments you made to those people.

I would encourage you, instead of just talking about rolling up your sleeves, as I see the Premier and the Minister of Finance doing almost daily in question period—when you roll them up, don't just roll them up to wash your hands of accountability or responsibility. I want to see those fingernails a little dirty and a little torn from your working to make ends meet. It can be done in this fiscal year. It won't be easy and it won't be pretty, but I can tell you that to sit there and make excuses—and now to have the Minister of Finance, the same Minister of Finance of course who said last year's books would be in deficit. Then, when he got a little rap on the knuckles by the acting Provincial Auditor, he said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I never should have said that; can't say that. They are actually balanced at the end of the day." That's pretty scary in itself, to have a Minister of Finance who doesn't know what the heck is going on in his own ministry with the finances of the province of Ontario.

At least have the dignity and the class to respect the Provincial Auditor's opinion at the end of the day. The Provincial Auditor says that's what public accounts are. The Provincial Auditor's opinion of where the previous year was usually comes out in August. This year it came out a little later, and I can understand why, it being an election year.

There are many things that can be done in the current fiscal year that are not being done. I understand the game of scoring short-term political hits. But I'm here to tell you that in the long term, not only the people of Ontario are going to pay the price if you don't change your attitude; so are you.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Mr Speaker, I would move adjournment of the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Orders of the day.

**Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1617.*

*Evening debate reported in volume B.*

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Honourable Alvin CurlingPrésident  
L'honorable Alvin CurlingClerk  
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

#### DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 11, 2003, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Before we set the clock for my 20 minutes, I'd like to first mention that I believe there is unanimous consent among all three parties that our leader's response to the speech will be held later this evening and at that time the clock will be stopped. Is that agreed?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona):** It's agreed.

**Ms Churley:** Here we are debating the throne speech. I must admit, it was so long ago, even though it was read twice—remember?—and I listened very carefully both times, I've almost forgotten what was in that speech. Does anybody here—

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** I know I'll get reminded time and time again tonight as members—the government in particular—get up and tell us what a wonderful throne speech it was; won't you?

I can guess what some of the members will say, but I wanted to read to you a little do-it-yourself oral question form, which I'm actually releasing under "Phony Liberal News Release," for the lobbed questions. It reads something like this:

"My question is for the fabulous minister of"—blank; you can put in whoever you want. "Your hair is so clean and your teeth are so white. The previous government left our"—whatever problem you want to insert—"in a huge mess and have hung our"—whatever sympathetic people or cause you want to put in—"out to dry. The Conservatives showed such"—and then you can choose disdain, scorn, badness; you insert what you want to put in. Then, "Tell us, Minister, how could the"—you could choose horrible, awful, nasty, brutish—"previous government have been so irresponsible, and what are you, our hardworking, clean toothed and shiny haired new minister, going to do to fix the problem?"

I can hand that around, and you can just fill it in so you won't have to really do much work on it.

That is, of course, if we don't have—we may have a deal by tomorrow. We're getting close, because we know that the lobbed questions, six or seven a day—it's unprecedented in this place from a government party. That may change because now the pressure is on, and we may in fact—I've got to hand it to the Premier for speaking to our leader and coming to what we hope are reasonable terms. Neither side is going to be totally happy, because that's what negotiations are all about. There are a few dangling problems there, but hopefully we'll sort those out overnight and we'll be able to have at least a few more questions from the New Democrats tomorrow. I'm sure we all want that.

**1850**

So the throne speech: One of the things I noticed in the throne speech, and that we all noticed—it was a very careful throne speech. The first thing the government said when they got into power and looked at the books—anybody who saw me on Focus Ontario the day after the election, along with Greg Sorbara, who was probably not appointed finance minister then but we all knew he would be, and the outgoing finance minister, Janet Ecker, talking about what we were expecting to see in the new government, may have noticed that I said some of the things I expected to hear in the throne speech. One of the things I said we might hear is, "Oh, well, we opened up the books and, lo and behold, to our absolute horror and surprise, there was a huge deficit left to us by the previous government."

Now, I've had some experience with that. I remember that when we won the government in 1990—admittedly unexpectedly; not a lot of people thought we were going to win—but you'll recall at that time that the then Liberal government called an election within three years of its mandate, and we were left with a deficit after we'd been told that there was going to be a surplus. These things happen. I submit that—

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** How much was that?

**Ms Churley:** I think it was a couple of billion, but it was quite a shock because, I say to the government House leader and poor energy minister—I know you've got your work cut out for you. I don't envy you. He's smiling at that. But deficits get left, and it doesn't matter which party stripe it is. Whoever is elected is going to try to capitalize on that when there are deficits left behind by another government, especially when they say there are



going to be surpluses. You make promises in an election and you find that you just don't have the money there to keep them.

The interesting thing, though, that I noticed about this throne speech was how often that was mentioned in terms of having to first—I don't have my notes in front of me, but there was a lot of talk about building that foundation first and not being able to keep all of the promises made. I believe there were about 231 promises made during the election campaign. Since that throne speech, we've seen—and we got fair warning, in a way, in the throne speech that there would be a lot of promises broken because of the deficit. We've seen, day after day, a lot of promises being broken as the government, as it's saying, is going to lay that foundation of getting the fiscal books in order again.

I remember saying on that TV show that that's what would be said. We didn't know what the number was—at least, the Liberals said they didn't know what the number was at that point. I recall that Mr Gerry Phillips, who was then the finance critic and now is Management Board chair in the government, said in the finance committee—he said it—that he believed there was at least a \$5-billion “risk,” is the way he put it. I know many Liberals say, “Well, he didn't quite say there was a deficit for sure. There was a risk,” which is essentially what the auditor has just said as well: There's a risk. Certain members of the government knew that, and the most respected—and I say this, actually, with great respect for the Chair of Management Board, who sat right over here not that far from me in the previous administration. I have to say, I used to listen very carefully to Mr Phillips when he got up and spoke about economics and finances. He's probably the expert in this Legislature. We all listen to him. If I wanted to know what was going on, many times I would get Hansard out and read his remarks from the day before if I missed them, because he always knew what he was talking about.

So when the new Chair of Management Board said in that committee that he believed there could be a deficit of up to \$5 billion, I believed him. I believe that anybody who knows Mr Phillips's work respects his ability to suss these things out. That includes all the members of the Liberal caucus who would have heard that remark. And it wasn't just him; it was the member—I forget his riding, but I'm trying to stick to the riding and the ministry, so I'll just say the new Minister of Corrections—who also said that he believed there could be at least a \$4-billion deficit. I believe that at another time he said there could be a \$5-billion deficit. So come on, folks. People knew that there could be a huge deficit.

Just before the election was called, a rather desperate, I have to admit, Janet Ecker, who was then the finance minister in the government, held a press conference with all kinds of background documentation to show there wouldn't be a deficit. I sat there with one of our more talented staffers, Charlie Campbell, the head of our research department, who has since been let go since we didn't achieve party status. Going through those docu-

ments with me, he noticed—we sussed it out ourselves in those documents; we could see, and I said to the press and it was published after. I don't have the same respect among the public and the media on financial and economic issues as Mr Gerry Phillips does—and did, at least then—but I believe I was quoted in the media as saying we found within that document, on the day of that press release and that press conference, up to a \$5-billion deficit.

I've got to tell you, folks: It wasn't that hard to find. We didn't need the auditor to tell us that that deficit was there. I saw, along with Mr Charlie Campbell, that there was that kind of deficit. It was dangling there in plain sight.

Our leader, Howard Hampton, in the debates and in the campaign, repeatedly told your leader and the then leader of the government, Premier Ernie Eves, that there was a huge deficit, and that all of the promises that were being made—you couldn't make them without taking that into account. But nobody listened within the Liberal Party. The Premier said repeatedly, over and over again, “We believe that there could be, I believe, up to a \$2-billion deficit,” is what he said. He always said, “Don't worry; we've got that covered.” When asked by the media, “How can you keep all these 231 promises when there's a deficit?” they said, “Don't worry; it's only going to be a couple of billion. We factored that in. We've had it costed out, and there's not going to be a problem here. We can keep all of our promises on time and also be able to pay down the smaller deficit” that they said they were then projecting.

This isn't just a budget deficit; in my view, this is a credibility deficit. That was a time when most people could see, anybody who was paying attention, that there was going to be a major, major deficit left behind by the Tories. We New Democrats, as you can well imagine, get quite a kick out of that: the Tories, of all the parties in this place.

I remember when they took over from us in 1995, when we left, yup, a huge deficit. We were left with one by the previous Liberal government and then we hit a bad recession. I know; people didn't agree with our strategy. That was their choice. They elected Tories in 1995 who gave huge tax cuts to people. It took them longer to pay off the deficit than New Democrats would have. We did have a plan when the economy was getting better, when the election came. We didn't have the opportunity to do that, but these Tories, time after time after time—I've got to say this in support of the Liberals, in this case: You've got Tories standing up now, day after day in question period, saying, “You're the government now; stop blaming us.” I have to say, for the eight years I was here it never stopped, day after day. They were still blaming New Democrats eight years later for all kinds of problems, eight years after being the government, and sometimes even the Liberals before New Democrats. Remember the famous phrase, “the 10 lost years,” meaning our government and the Liberal government before?

So I have to laugh when I hear that. They of all people, who ran on being fiscally responsible, leaving



such a huge deficit behind in good economic times. Mr Speaker, I know you're one of them. You're in the chair right now so you have to be nice to me, but you know what I mean. You know what I mean. Tories, of all people, fiscally responsible Tories, leaving behind such a huge deficit—and I don't think you needed to. You gave these 30% tax cuts, mostly to wealthy people and big corporations; borrowed money to give tax cuts to these people.

New Democrats, when in government during a terrible recession, borrowed money to help people. We did. A lot of people disagreed with us. We didn't lower welfare rates; we kept on giving money to schools and education and health care and environment. We made all those choices to keep people afloat and try to create employment during a very bad recession. That's what we borrowed money for. After us, Tories borrowed money, instead of paying down the deficit and building up programs, tore programs down and then, because of these tax cuts to the wealthy, left us with a huge social deficit.

1900

This gets me back to the issue we're discussing here tonight; that is, the throne speech and the need for this new Liberal government, from which the shine is very quickly coming off—and I understand that; it came off us pretty quickly too. It's pretty tough when you make a lot of promises. We did keep a lot of ours, but we broke some too, no doubt about it. But I think this government has broken the record for the most broken promises within the first couple of weeks of taking over government.

I want to talk for a minute about the importance of this Liberal government keeping most of those promises. The reason I talked about the deficit the Tories left behind—both a financial deficit and a huge social and environmental deficit—is that it has to be dealt with. People voted for Liberals because they wanted that social deficit dealt with and they believed Dalton McGuinty and Liberals when they stood up time after time and said, "We can do it all. We can pay down the deficit that we believe to be there, a couple of billion"—some knew it was bigger than that—"and we can keep those promises." People voted for the Liberals actually for two reasons: to get the dreaded Tories out—and it worked this time, and I think we can all applaud that, and the second reason people voted for the Liberals was that they believed your promises, and now you're breaking all those promises. Day after day we hear those promises broken because of the deficit. I'm not saying that all of you knew about the over \$5-billion deficit. I believe there are honourable members here who, had they known that, might not have felt so free in making some of those promises.

Education: Look at the huge deficit created in education here into Toronto—child care, children's mental health, autism, which my colleague from Nickel Belt brought up the other day, health care in general. The environment, water: The previous government laid off at least 750—actually more, but that's the number that's out there most, and you can calculate it differently—and cut the budget, depending on whether you combine capital

and operating, by up to 60%. Six zero per cent: That's a lot of cutting from a very important ministry. We had the Walkerton tainted water tragedy.

The only way we're going to be able to fix a lot of these problems is through investing again. The only way to do that is to take back some of that tax cut, not just the cancellation, which I applaud and agree with and support.

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** Did you vote for it?

**Ms Churley:** I certainly did on second reading, and I will on third.

Liberals say, "Did you vote for it?" Let me tell you something: At first reading, the seven so-called independents, who are now called New Democrats, thanks to the Speaker, didn't get a copy of the bill. You learned too from previous experience that when there's a bill before the House and you're told it's about one thing and haven't had an opportunity to see if there's something else in there—and it's happened to all of us before—you could end up voting for something and finding out there's another little thing inserted in that bill that you didn't know about that might get you into hot water. It might be something you might not agree with. So on principle I will not support a bill—and it was partly protest; we wanted an opportunity to have a look at what we were voting for. But I certainly fully support, and have said on many occasions when I had the opportunity to speak—and that's not a lot these days, but when I do—that I support—

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** What was that?

**Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** You've had plenty of time to speak.

**Ms Churley:** Somebody from the Liberals disagrees with me, but that's another story. She doesn't like me very much, but that's OK.

*Interjections.*

**Ms Churley:** I've only got a couple minutes left. What's important for all of us to remember here—and it's going to get you into huge trouble if you don't grapple with this; I know there are people in the backrooms trying to grapple with it—is that you're going to have to take back some of those mammoth tax cuts. Many of the members weren't here—the new members—but some were, and were on their hind legs day after day when the Tories were giving these huge tax breaks to big corporations and wealthy people, time after time. We now have to be able to take some of that back. New Democrats ran on that, and we will continue—and now we can prove it. You're proving it for us. You cannot deal with the social deficit without doing something about those huge tax breaks that the Tories gave to rich people and corporations when they were in—

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Oh, come on.

**Ms Churley:** It's true. Now the Tories are complaining. It's true. Liberals then, you remember, were over there on their hind legs every day, saying you can't take that much money out of the revenue coming in and be able to keep the services. That's what we saw happening.



Now the Liberals are in a position—you shouldn't smile at this, because I can tell you right now that a year from now you are going to be in such trouble after making all of these promises to fix the environment, to fix the education system, to fix health care, to fix all of these things. You're not going to be able to do it, because you don't have the money, and you're blaming it on a huge deficit that you knew about before you won the election. People are not going to buy it for very long. They're giving you a little bit of wiggle room now. The meetings have started in my office; the phone calls are coming from people who wanted to give you the benefit of the doubt. It's going down the tubes. You're going to have to grapple with that, my friends, and find a way to deal with it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I'd like to make a few comments on the throne speech and the words put forth by the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Let me first of all say that it was indeed the highlight of my political career, and I'm sure it was a highlight for many of the new members and senior members of the Liberal colleagues that I have here, to sit here on that day and listen to a throne speech. We all worked hard. We took our platform to the people of Ontario, and they rewarded us with the seat of government. Of course, we then heard a throne speech, and I have to tell you that it was a proud day for me to be on this side of the House and to have received the vote from the people of Chatham-Kent Essex once again.

What we're going to do, as enunciated in the throne speech and the days following, is work hard. We're going to work hard to ensure that our water is safe for each and every person in Ontario to drink. We're going to be guardians of our environment in a very vigorous way. We're going to make sure the food that we eat is protected, as witnessed by the new meat inspectors that we have announced. We're going to make sure that our hospitals are funded. We're going to ensure that our schools—and I'm so very pleased to hear the announcement on rural schools that came last week. We're going to ensure that those schools have a way of thriving. We're going to fix the flawed formula that came from the government of some days past. And we're going to work diligently, day in and day out, to deal with the \$5.6-billion deficit that we inherited from the party across the aisle. We're going to work hard with the revelation of \$800 million of hospital debt in this province on top of a \$5.6-billion deficit. We're going to work hard when we learn that the children's aid society was \$25 million in debt. We're going to work hard to correct all those wrongs.

**Mr Dunlop:** That was a little painful, listening to that. We'll carry on a little more this evening.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Dunlop:** Well, you can say what you want. But before I make any comments, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you, Mr Speaker, and to the members of this House some folks who are actually from

Norm Miller's riding. I want to introduce you to Millie and Doug Graham, who are in our gallery here. If I may, because this is very important, Doug is, first of all, a new councillor in the township of Seguin. Millie suffered a stroke about 10 years ago and is a spokesperson for the Heart and Stroke Foundation across our province. She has visited my riding, and I do want to wish a warm welcome on behalf of all the members here in the House to Millie and Doug tonight.

Thank you very much for not heckling me on that.

**1910**

I'm looking forward to a lot of debate here this evening. I want to debate what I call Barney's budget, the purple budget, the so-called fiscal outlook by a consultant you hired, someone by the name of Erik Peters, who should know better than to put a piece of garbage like this together. Of course, that is the thrust of your throne speech here. You followed this \$5.6 billion crap, eight or 10 or 20 times through it. Instead of actually facing the reality that you are the government, what you're trying to do, as a new party, is blame everything on the previous government. Start acting like a government and quit trying to be the opposition. Get real about this issue.

I'm looking forward to a lot more comment. I'll talk to you later.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** My friend Mr Garfield over here from—which riding?

**Mr Dunlop:** Simcoe North.

**Mr Bisson:** Boy, that's a bit of a stretch, I've got to say. This is an interesting debate, because my colleague from Toronto-Danforth raised the point that the Liberals knew about the deficit. Nobody in this province was surprised about the size of the deficit. There may have been an argument, is it \$5.2 billion we're expecting at this point? Was it \$5.3 billion, \$5.6 billion or \$5 billion? But for sure, everybody knew there was going to be a deficit this year of at least \$5 billion.

Why did we know that? Because last spring I sat on an estimates committee, along with the now Chair of Management Board, Mr Phillips, who was at that time the opposition finance critic, who said that there was going to be an at least \$5-billion deficit.

So this is an interesting situation we find ourselves in in this House, because you've got the Liberals, who have said, "We didn't know. Really? There's a deficit? Oh, my God, we're so surprised." You've got the Tories saying, "There is no deficit. It never existed." And we're saying, "Everybody knew there was a deficit." So the same number is seen three different ways in this Legislature, depending on which party you're in.

I'm going to go by the record. There is a deficit. I agree with the Liberals. There is a deficit; it's at least \$5.6 billion. If you listen to the finance minister, Mr Sorbara, it's probably higher than \$5.6 billion. Ask yourself the question, why are they pushing up the numbers? The Liberals can't meet the expectations they've created among stakeholder groups, such as the heart and stroke people. They're going to try to find ways to break some



of those promises by saying that there is not enough money.

The reality is that we knew going into the budget of last year that, quite frankly, there was going to be a deficit. For the Tories to come to the House today and say there wasn't a deficit, that the Liberals are making it all up—no, no. Listen, I have confidence in Erik Peters, the auditor of the day. He is a respected person. We know. We've worked with him for a number of years. We had him as our NDP auditor, the Liberals had him and the Tories had him before. At the end of the day, one thing is agreed: There is a deficit of over \$5 billion. The Liberals knew it, the Tories knew it and we know it. Let's move on.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I'm pleased to respond to the member for Riverdale.

First of all, let me say to the Tory members opposite that you can't quibble with Mr Peters in this, as much as you'd like to. In fact, the province's audited financial statements eventually will attest to what we're saying. Let me say, without saying too much, there is a lot more to come on this story, and it will be coming out in due course.

I say to my colleague from Riverdale, whose response to the speech from the throne—

**The Acting Speaker:** Toronto-Danforth.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I'm sorry, Toronto-Danforth. I apologize.

I say to my colleague, who is always impassioned, that when she was the government, they refused to deal with the financial situation. Their first budget began building a series of deficits that left the province \$10 billion in the hole.

Unfortunately, due to those missteps at the very beginning of their term in government, not only were they not able to keep their commitments, they were able to do things that one never would have thought would be done by an NDP government: a social contract which opened and stripped collective agreements across this province. They had committed to public auto insurance. That was at the core of their value system, and what did they do? They broke their promise on that, along with a range of other issues.

So I suspect that that's one of the reasons why in roughly nine short years we've gone from 70-some of them here to seven of them here. Until they come to terms with the fact that you have to deal with the province's financial reality before you can deal with the real and pressing needs, they will not have much to say in the public discourse in that regard.

In short, we will keep our promises. We have four years to do that. We're laying the groundwork to do that by cleaning up the mess of the previous government and the NDP government before that. The government has to take tough decisions in order to move forward. We're doing that and we will move this province forward in the course of the next four years.

**The Acting Speaker:** Reply, the member for Toronto-Danforth.

**Ms Churley:** I thought we were going to get to hear Frank. I'm sure the Speaker knows what he's doing.

Thank you all for your comments, and there were some fair comments made. It's true that certain promises were broken by New Democrats, promises were broken by Tories, although they say they didn't break any. Remember the hospitals that were closed, and other things? Yep, some promises were broken, but I think, as I said, this government has broken a record on broken promises. Here's what some people are saying. Where's the one I wanted to read in particular?

"Dalton McGuinty was wrong, dead wrong, when he said 'the world has changed' because of Ontario's \$5.6-billion deficit.

"The sad truth is that the world's the same as it's always been—and in this world politicians like Premier McGuinty continue to deceive and mislead a gullible public for their own gain.

"Having heard the same, poor-me line too many times before, we are left wondering what other Liberal promises are expendable." That's from the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*.

There are also comments like those from Terry Graves, Public Concern Temiskaming:

"It's a sellout. During the election campaign"—this is about Adams mine and the take-water permit—"the Liberals committed to a moratorium on water-taking permits.... They haven't done that ... and they committed to a comprehensive review of the environmental assessment processes as it applies to the Adams mine, and they haven't done that."

Somebody else says, "I voted Liberal for one reason—Dalton McGuinty promised without a shadow of a doubt that he was going to stop the building of 6,600 houses on the Oak Ridges moraine.... If he can change his mind on the moraine after the election, I should be allowed to change my vote.

"Tony Moretto, Oakville."

These are the kinds of things that are being said now. People voted for Liberals because these promises were made, and they've been broken.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** I am going to speak to the throne speech tonight, but I'm going to speak to it in the context of my values and some information about Don Valley West. I understand that as this is my maiden speech, I have some latitude; the Speaker will give me some latitude. Thank you.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the speakers who have spoken before me tonight, including the member for Toronto-Danforth who as a fellow Toronto MPP has served her constituency well for many years.

It is a great privilege to stand here tonight where so many distinguished Ontarians have stood before me. This room has been a backdrop for many profound words and memorable moments, and I know that knowledge weighs on all of us, those of us who are new here. Although I have spoken here before, I hope that what I say tonight will give some impression of my values and my inten-



tions as I take up this new role that I'm so honoured to have attained.

First, I want to thank the people of Don Valley West, who have expressed their confidence in me and in our vision of Ontario, and especially the people who worked for me in my campaign. We knocked on 40,000 doors in Don Valley West over the course of our campaign. So every community we went into, we knew people and we really came to know the riding.

Over the next four years there's going to be a lot of rhetoric, I trust some intellectual wrangling, and much partisan conflict here. I have watched this chamber as an outsider for many years and I know that at times the debate will be raw and the remarks scathing; now I know this first-hand. At the same time, I know it's the hope of the residents of Don Valley West—and I join with them in this hope—that at the end of the day we, as a government, will have been able to improve upon the situation we find ourselves in today.

#### 1920

The throne speech delivered on November 20 demonstrates our commitment to tell Ontarians the hard truths about our collective situation and to move forward to implement the changes we've promised, having put our house in order. That is what the speech says and that is the exercise in which we are engaged.

I am here, I ran for office provincially, because I believe that we are at a critical juncture in Toronto and in Ontario. We have had eight long years of disillusionment and distress as we've watched the undermining of our schools, our hospitals, public transportation and environmental protection. I am a 50-year-old woman. There are other things I could be doing, but I feel it is so important that we promote this agenda at this particular time in our history. The disabled, the old and the poor have become increasingly worried about their future as their services have been cut, their rents have been increased beyond their ability to pay and food bank usage continues to rise, because for eight long years the root causes of poverty have been allowed to flourish. At the same time, citizens have felt that they have less say in the decisions affecting their lives.

Our platform recognized this crisis. That's why we got elected, because we understood what was happening in the province. People responded to that, and that's why we're here. The throne speech, in its turn, reflects our commitment to deal with these issues in the most responsible way we can. Eight years of neglect cannot be undone in a few weeks, but thinking people understand that we can rebuild this province by making decent, responsible changes, and that is what we're about.

I represent a riding in Toronto, Don Valley West, that is among the wealthiest in the province; in fact, it's among the wealthiest in the country. But that only tells a very small part of the story. Don Valley West, like so many Toronto ridings, is large and diverse, comprising at least seven discrete neighbourhoods, where 53% of the residents are tenants and more than 40% are immigrants to Canada. The extremely wealthy coexist with the ex-

tremely poor in this riding. Families whose roots extend back to the early days of Upper Canada vote alongside families who arrived in Canada within the last five years. Children from dozens of countries share public school classrooms and learn to appreciate their differences and celebrate their similarities.

Don Valley West is an exemplary microcosm of this country, especially its urban face. Physically, Don Valley West is more uptown than downtown, and has an intricate web of walking paths connecting the streets of Don Mills. Small businesses, greengrocers, hardware shops and flower shops serve the same communities they've served for 50 years along Yonge Street and Bayview Avenue. The industrial and commercial park in Leaside is at the heart of that community. Our promise to revitalize brownfields is of particular interest to those folks.

Along Bayview Avenue sits a whole row of important institutions: Sunnybrook and Women's College hospital; the Canadian National Institute for the Blind; the Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College; Glendon College; and Bloorview MacMillan Centre. These are all institutions, which, like the city, draw people from around the province, from across the country. So they belong to the riding I represent, but they belong to all of you; they belong to the entire country, not one riding.

Like ridings across the province, Don Valley West is at the same critical juncture. Residents of Leaside and Don Mills want to know that we're going to reform the Ontario Municipal Board to strengthen the local democratic process, and they'll be happy with the changes to the Planning Act that were introduced by Minister Gertsen today. They're fed up with local decisions being overturned by a body that seems to be biased against neighbourhoods.

Parents in North Toronto and Bennington Heights want to know that we're committed to public education and that we'll work with local school boards to keep their community schools open, and to ensure that their children's schools once again have frills like librarians, phys-ed teachers, music teachers, textbooks. Those are the things that they're looking for.

People living along Bayview Avenue in York Mills want to be assured that they're not going to lose their bus service because the TTC can't afford to buy new buses and keep them on the road. Youth and parents in Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon Park want to know that their school gyms and meeting spaces will once more be available to them in the off hours. Those schools are the community public space, and they're locked tight in the evening. We need access to those buildings. We can't afford to build new community centres in every community in this province. We need to use our school buildings, and that means community use of schools after hours.

We have a remarkable pool of talent living in these communities. It would be foolish of us, as a society, to let enthusiasm and hope turn to bitterness. That's exactly what has been happening for the last eight years.



Families who are new to Canada want reassurance that we will help them to use their professional skills here. Senior citizens across the riding want to know that home care will be available to them so that they can stay in their homes and not be moved into an institution prematurely.

Like any riding in a large city, there's a range of agencies that exist to serve those in need. Some, like the Aphasia Institute in Don Valley West, target a very specific problem. Others, like the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services, meet the needs of a huge cross-section of people thrown together by circumstance. Volunteers and staff in these agencies work miracles on shoestring budgets that have not been adjusted for eight years. I think that is something that is common to service agencies across the province. Their operating budgets, their base budgets have not gone up, so they are not able to provide the services now that they were eight or 10 years ago.

The Flemingdon Community Health Centre is one of the models we will look to when we're reforming primary care in Ontario. It is the agency, it is the centre where Premier McGuinty, during the campaign, released our health platform. It is a model that we should be looking to.

Churches, mosques and synagogues in Don Valley West, in all their variety—we cover the range—provide sanctuary for people of faith from around the globe.

At the heart of every community, there are schools: public, Catholic, French, French immersion, private schools, nursery schools and child care centres in church basements.

We have some unique experiments in education in Don Valley West. One of those is the Overland Learning Centre, which combines delivery of English-as-a-second-language classes with community adult education programs. Those programs service seniors, parents, pre-schoolers and a wide range of people who wouldn't have access to continuing education unless that school that was closed previously had been turned into this vibrant learning centre. Those are the models that we need to be looking for. Those best practices need to be spread across the city and across the province. Unfortunately, food banks are also a part of the Don Valley West landscape. Far from disappearing, they're actually a growth industry.

When I speak in this House, I'm speaking in the interest of all of those people who elected me and who I represent, all of the residents in Don Valley West who work in those agencies, who work in those schools, who access those services. Like all Ontarians, they are concerned about their children's education, their health and the health of the parents, their grandparents, the air they breathe, the food they eat and the water they drink. Their interest is my interest. There's no separation because I'm here and they're out there, going about their lives, doing the best they can. I'm just here doing my piece of that job.

I know they'll be watching and listening to me as we deliberate. They may not be watching right this minute,

but they are paying attention. I will get their e-mails. I will meet them in the riding and I will meet them outside of the riding. I know that they're hoping they will find reflected in our words and actions, and in the policies that we put forward, the intention and the implementation of policies that will make this province a better place to live. I know that that's what they're looking for.

They expect us to continue to tell them the truth. They expect that we will indeed work with city governments to put infrastructure back on the rails. They expect that we will work with democratically elected school boards to improve publicly funded education, and work with health care providers to make sure that Ontarians get the care they need in hospital and at home.

#### 1930

We have made a start in the throne speech. We all know there's more to do. We've charted our course. I believe that we will stay on track and that we're on track. We all have responsibilities as individuals in this collective government, and I just want to talk for a couple of minutes about my own individual responsibilities. I've talked about my responsibilities to the people who elected me and to the people whom I represent. But I believe we have personal responsibilities beyond the geography of our ridings, and those responsibilities define us and, in the words of sociology, they locate us in terms of who we are and who we speak to.

I have an historical responsibility, for example, to the members of my family who came here from Glasgow, Dublin and Bournemouth, who cleared land and farmed, built churches, went to war, educated themselves as teachers and doctors so that I could have a better life. I can hear their voices as I make decisions in my life.

I'm a lucky woman. I've had the privilege of a solid, intelligent upbringing, surrounded by a loving family. I've never known poverty; I've never known ill health. My blessings have been abundant. I've benefited enormously from this society. I owe a debt of gratitude, and I see my service and behaviour here as part of the payment of that debt.

I have a responsibility to my own three children, one of whom is here in the gallery—Jessie—and to my partner, Jane, who is also here. They have every right to expect me to demonstrate that position and status cannot be allowed to undermine fundamental decency, honesty and integrity.

I believe I have a responsibility to women in Ontario, who are certainly better represented in this House than in the past. I went and looked at the picture outside from 1888, which was when my grandmother was born, and it was a very different face on this Legislature than today. Having said that, women still continue to be under-represented in terms of the general population, so I feel I have a responsibility to women.

As far as I know, I am the first openly lesbian MPP in Ontario. As such, I have a responsibility to young lesbians who are looking for examples of hope and success. I have run for office three times, twice successfully, and in each campaign I have had to confront overt homo-



phobia. Homophobia, like racism, ageism, ableism, sexism and all the destructive hatreds, has to be challenged at every turn, and I believe that it's part of my responsibility—not my whole responsibility, but it's part of my responsibility—to do that.

I was a young mother with three children under four, and I have a personal responsibility to young mothers who are trying to balance the needs of their children, including finding decent child care, with their own needs to express themselves in the world outside their homes. I know that out there there's a young woman who's trying to figure out how to write a novel or become a lawyer or become a politician, and she's trying to look after her children at the same time. Their voices are often silenced because their lives are so full, so I have a responsibility to them.

I was a parent activist. I have a responsibility to listen to activists who struggle without resources to fill the gaps left by government. Their voices are often silenced because they don't have a photocopier, but simply because they have no access, or think they have no access, to the table where decisions are being made. We all have a responsibility to listen to them, but I was not long ago there.

These are responsibilities that I take very seriously. They will inform my work and my contributions here.

I want to talk briefly about an issue that has been in the press most recently and has been documented in the report of the Ontario Human Rights Commission in its report *Paying the Price: The Human Cost of Racial Profiling*. It's almost trite to say that this country and this province, in particular, have been built by diverse populations from around the world, but I think we need to keep saying it because we need to recognize the struggle inherent in weaving a society that respects and celebrates difference.

Professor Ursula Franklin, for any of you who have heard her speak—the scientist and peace activist—contends that our public institutions, and particularly our public education system, are at the heart of our civil society and our relative peace and calm. If we expect to get to the bottom of the troublesome issues of racial profiling in our streets and in our schools, we will have to look frankly at the educational opportunities we're providing our children and their teachers. We will have to look honestly at the resources we provide teachers, the breadth of the curriculum we ask them to teach and the opportunities we give them to explore their own attitudes.

Racial profiling, which can be a manifestation of racism, like homophobia, sexism, ableism, ageism and all the -isms that I mentioned earlier, is systemic. Racial profiling is obviously a particularly destructive force, but if we are ever to address the systemic attitudes that target, exclude and blame, each of us is going to have to examine his or her own attitudes. As legislators, I believe it is a fundamental task for us to put forward the frameworks in which individual Ontarians can then look at their own attitudes. There should be no shame in recognizing that each of us has internalized prejudices

and fears; we're all the product of an imperfect society, but we can change behaviours and, by changing behaviours, we can change attitudes.

We can teach children empathy. There are brilliant educators in this country who are teaching children to look at the world through another's eyes. Some of you may be familiar with Mary Gordon's work, a program called *Roots of Empathy*, where a baby is brought into a classroom and rough and tough grade 7 and 8 kids start to interact with the baby and start to watch and learn how the child is responding, and develop those empathetic abilities.

But that doesn't happen without resources. If we want our children's emotional quotient to be as high as their intellectual quotient, then we're going to have to put the resources into developing those attitudes. I can tell you, folks, those programs are disappearing from our schools. Those programs that provide a fundamental base for a tolerant, civil society are disappearing, and we're going to have to stem that tide very quickly if we want to be able to move forward.

I ran for provincial office because I believe that Ontario expects its government to be compassionate, responsible and even-handed. That is the message I got loud and clear from thousands of people I talked to in Don Valley West. That is the vision that I am here to promote and to work hard to implement.

I'm going to talk about one of my role models, one of my heroes, Nellie McClung, who served in the Alberta Legislature from 1921 to 1926. Her life and words resonate with me. McClung was 48 years old when she was elected, two years my junior, but still not a young woman. She was a slightly older contemporary of my grandmother, so only one generation removed from me; we're not that far away. McClung was an unapologetic suffragette with a deep belief in social justice, for which she fought all her life. She said, "Never retreat, never explain, never apologize—get things done and let them howl!" Had Nellie McClung lived 80 years later, with us, she might have softened her delivery, but maybe not. She might have used exactly the same words, and I have to tell you that those words ring true. I hold on to the fire of her conviction in my dark moments.

One of my contemporary role models is Dianne Poole, who sat in this House representing the former riding of Eglinton, parts of which are now in Don Valley West, from 1987 to 1995. In her maiden speech in 1987, she remarked that it was "the desire of the people of Ontario to be governed by a balance of fiscal responsibility and social conscience." She called that balance "liberalism." I am proud to be a member of a Liberal government whose objective it is to achieve just that balance. November's throne speech reflects our commitment to that goal.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's my pleasure to respond to the member from Don Valley West. I recall the previous member who sat in that very riding, David Turnbull. It brings fond memories because he was the whip. Nonetheless, I'm sure you don't want that role, to be the whip of your party, as Mr Levac would regret that.



Anyway, I think it's important to just put some context around the throne speech issue, which you didn't speak about. But the people have to be reminded. I think the best speech, objectively, was given by Howard Hampton. I'm going to cite the Hansard of November 24.

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** He has nothing to gain by telling the truth. In fact, he talked to some extent by saying: "I just want to say that the Premier, in his speech, referred to character education in our schools." I stress the character education component. What he said is that the government should start with itself by not making promises they can't keep.

**1940**

I've got a little barometer in my office, it's sort of like one of those fundraising events, and the red line keeps going up. They had 231 promises. By now I think it's up to 240 promises, and the fact is, they've even broken the new promises. It's frightening. What kind of message does this send to our children of failing to keep your promises? This is kind of a code of ethics in the culture of Canada, the fair-minded culture of Canada, that members here want to embrace.

I think if you want to look to other references—this is what the people of Ontario want you to do. They voted for you to do certain things. For instance, we're discussing the tax bill, Bill 5, today on auto insurance. You promised one thing. Do you know what they did today? I don't know whether it's in order, in the few minutes left—they failed to show up, and there was no public input on Bill 5. The victims were left without a voice. It's almost embarrassing to have been a member of that committee.

**Ms Churley:** I want to congratulate the member for Don Valley West for a superb speech. It makes me think that I should write my own speeches from time to time and think through it a little before I stand up.

It's not often in this place that we can listen to basically a non-partisan speech, because this is a very partisan place; it's the nature of our work. I like the opportunity to listen to a maiden speech. As a feminist, I have to say that in this modern day and age, I wonder why we still call it the "maiden" speech, if you know what I mean. However, it is really nice to be able to hear somebody stand up and talk about who they are, what they believe in, what their aspirations are, and certainly talk about their community.

In many ways the community she describes is my community. I was listening and reflecting and thinking about the diversity in my community of the wealthy and the poor and the different ethnic groups and all of the things. She painted a very realistic and very nice picture of her community, the community that she is here to represent.

I have to say, in this non-partisan speech that I rarely give, I have a great deal of admiration and respect for the member for Don Valley West. I thought she did a tremendous job as a critic, in many ways, against the former government as a school trustee in the city of

Toronto. I know I relied on her frequently, along with Paula Fletcher and others.

I just want to say that I really enjoyed her speech tonight and I look forward to working in any way that we can to further her community and indeed all of our communities within this province, which after all, she reminded us we're elected to do.

**Mr Leal:** I thoroughly enjoyed the maiden speech of the member for Don Valley West.

It's really interesting, because I have an aunt who lives in Don Valley West. She lives on Millwood Road, and a couple of weeks ago she provided me with a book that was written by Councillor Jane Pitfield on the history of Leaside. It was very interesting to hear this evening some of the elements that have been described about the unique characteristics of Don Valley West that are indeed in Councillor Pitfield's book. As a person who has had a long-standing interest in all parts of Ontario, it's really interesting that, when you think of Toronto as being a rather large place, there are indeed these great pockets of community interest that have the great community characteristics so ably described by the member for Don Valley West.

I know she has a great interest in education, a very distinguished career as an education trustee here in Toronto, and is a person who I know will be a real driving force over the next four years to make sure that some of the commitments we made in our platform do come to fruition. We know that she has an absolute commitment to public education in Ontario, and with her talent and interest I know that agenda will be certainly driven forward.

What I really took into account from the member from Don Valley West is—one of my political heroes was the late Senator Hubert Humphrey in the States. When Senator Humphrey made his last speech to the American Senate, he was dying from cancer. He said that the measure of any society is how it looks after its disabled, its disadvantaged and disenfranchised. When I heard the member from Don Valley West this evening, she certainly touched upon those elements of our society that I think need help and that our platform will help to address over the next four years. It's a real privilege to have an opportunity to reflect on the remarks of the member from Don Valley West.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I certainly want to congratulate the member from Don Valley West on her presentation tonight. A maiden speech is always a very important historical occasion for members in this House. I appreciate the member's enthusiasm for what she has taken on in terms of public service, and I wish her well in her career.

I would say at the outset, though, that I believe this member is going to have a very challenging time. As I listened to the values that she indicated drew her into public service, she's going to have a very difficult time dealing with the party that she has affiliated herself with and a very difficult time explaining to her constituents how she can on the one hand campaign, and I believe



honourably so, for all of these initiatives that now are falling by the wayside, all of these commitments, these promises that are being made that are not being kept.

I gather from the honourable member's background that she would know full well that many of the explanations and the spin that's being given to her and other members of the backbench of this new government—I'm sure this honourable member sees through that, that these promises cannot be kept because of a so-called phony \$5.6-billion deficit which, by the way, we still have five months left to deal with. That is the challenge of this government. I look to the honourable member to do her part in the government benches to bring them into compliance and in fact to honour those very important values of which she speaks.

**The Acting Speaker:** A response from the member for Don Valley West.

**Ms Wynne:** I want to thank the members for Oak Ridges, Durham, Peterborough and Toronto-Danforth for their comments.

The only thing I want to say is that I don't spin. That's the thing about the people of Don Valley West. I'm just going to tell them the truth. I'm going to tell them what's happening.

A couple of weeks ago, I went to a ratepayers' meeting in Leaside actually. There was a huge number of people for a ratepayers' meeting. It was an AGM; there were 200 people in this room. We were just at the beginning, and I thought, "What's this going to be like?" It was fine. It was just after the throne speech had been delivered. What was in the throne speech made sense to people because they are thinking people. They're watching us, and they're looking at a reasonable implementation of what we said we were going to do, so I am very confident that the less we try to spin and the more we try to tell people the truth, the better off we're going to be.

What's so refreshing is that there hasn't been that for the last eight years. We haven't experienced that for the last eight years.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Wynne:** I'm saying we need to have that move away from spin. I am really looking forward to working with my colleagues to tell Ontarians, people who live in Don Valley West, exactly what's going on, exactly what our plan is, every step of the way. I look forward to working with everyone in the House on that.

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**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

*Applause.*

**Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):** Thank you very much for the warm applause. It's kind of a nice change since I've been here.

I would like to thank the electors of my riding for the faith that they have shown me by electing me as their MPP.

The constituency of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, in my humble opinion, is one of the finest regions in Ontario. It has a little bit of everything: urban and rural, forests and farms, lakes and rivers. It stretches from the unspoiled

expanses of Algonquin Park to the borders of the GTA. Thousands of Ontarians flock to our area every year to enjoy nature at its finest. Haliburton-Victoria-Brock is a coalition of small towns, picturesque villages and rural settings. From Carnarvon to Sebright to Beaverton, to Sunderland, to Pontypool, to Fowlers Corners to Burleigh Falls to Apsley, to Cardiff and to all the points in between, it is rural Ontario at its finest.

**Mr O'Toole:** It has good golf courses.

**Ms Scott:** Yes, it has good golf courses also. We hope to get more.

Haliburton-Victoria-Brock has also produced some outstanding citizens. It's the home of Leslie Frost, a widely admired Premier of the province. He used to sit in the barber's chair in Lindsay and said that was the best view of what was going on in Ontario. More recently, we had Chris Hodgson, who represented our riding—

*Interjections.*

**Ms Scott:** These are both great men who worked unselfishly for the betterment of their communities and the province. I hope I can carry on that great tradition, established by these predecessors and many others who have served our constituency and Ontario.

I hail from the small hamlet of Kinmount, situated on the edge of Peterborough county, Haliburton county, the old Victoria county and now the present city of Kawartha Lakes. The little street where I was raised contained only four houses, but it produced an MP and two MPPs, myself the third servant of the people to call this street home.

I grew up in the rich tradition of community services. Communities are only as strong as their volunteers and service organizations. My family taught me to work hard and participate to make community a better place to live. My fondest memories are of community events: parades, parties, anniversaries, birthdays, festivals or the local fair. My brother Guy and I are the fourth generation to serve as members of the Kinmount fair board. The community spirit is still strong in my corner of Ontario, and I want it to remain vibrant and grow even stronger.

I am not a complete novice to the art of politics. My father, Bill Scott, represented the same riding in the House of Commons for 28 consecutive years. Of course, with my young age, I've lived most of my life in politics. I'll simply state that I had a really good teacher.

I was taught by my constituents to work hard for the betterment of the whole country and represent my riding with dignity and pride. My mother was a businesswoman who juggled owning and operating a business, raising a family, being a political spouse and contributing to her community.

That past campaign was a great learning experience for me. I believe you never stop learning, and I've listened to the people of my riding. I have heard their concerns, their cares, their problems, their worries and what issues they feel are important. I believe it is part of my job to carry these issues and concerns before this assembly. I aim to be their spokesperson.



What do I hear in the rural hinterland of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock? What is on the minds of these constituents?

Some 25% of my constituents are over the age of 65. Many of these seniors have chosen to make this section of rural Ontario their retirement home. They have selected this area for its quiet, slower lifestyle and rustic charms. Many converted their summer cottages to retirement homes. But concern does lurk amongst the senior population. Rising taxes, combined with a fixed income, threatens their ability to remain in their long-sought dream homes. A recent tax relief proposal would have taken a small step to address this danger, but alas, this small measure of aid to a threatened group of nation-builders has been revoked by our new government.

Today I rise to debate the government's throne speech. I would first like to discuss some of the financial areas of the speech that affect my riding. The main economic contributors there are not giant corporations with high-paid accountants or business advisers who can help them absorb the impact of higher taxes and higher hydro rates. The main economic contributors in my area of the province are the agri-industry and the small tourism operators.

My riding contains some of the finest farms in Ontario. The farm sector has endured some tough times in the last few years. Agriculture was one of Ontario's founding industries and is still one of our most important and proudest sectors. The family farm is under siege. I strongly urge the new administration to protect, encourage and revitalize agriculture.

Tourist operators have proudly trumpeted the natural beauty of my area for generations. Once again, tough times have darkened this traditional industry. The government must act with vigour and determination to prove to Canadians, Americans and the world that Ontario is safe and a spectacular and splendid place to visit. Driving up these costs on these already overtaxed small businesses could mean the difference between opening and closing their doors this year.

Since 1995, we've created a lot of jobs in Ontario. In my riding alone, over 2,500 people have been taken successfully off the cycle of dependence. We helped find them jobs.

Infrastructure is important in my riding. Transportation is important. The previous Conservative government made upgrades to Highway 7 through Omemee, Highway 35 north to Minden and south to Lindsay, the Highway 118 expansion to Carnarvon, planned expansions of the 404 and four-laning of Highway 35 to Lindsay. We've put the basis down for infrastructure. We need to continue it.

Increasing taxes and hydro rates are damaging to the economy of my riding. An outcome of these increases which is real but often unforeseen is in the ability to attract new businesses.

Consumers and small business alike were able to forecast the economics of this business over many years and therefore make personal and corporate decisions based on knowing that their taxes were going to go down

and their hydro rates were stable. By making and breaking your promise on hydro rates and increasing corporate taxes, you effectively removed any sense of assurance that the people and commercial interests in my riding have on these important components of fiscal planning.

You are stimulating driving up costs to the consumer and creating uncertainty among small business owners. This can only produce a disastrous effect on our local economy.

The residents of this corner of the province have also expressed a concern over the availability and reliability of electricity at a reasonable price. The blackout vividly pointed out how reliant our present society is on electricity. Urban and rural, we need a plentiful supply to make our world run. Your recent broken promise not to raise hydro rates has worried and enraged many Ontarians. We'll be watching our hydro bills with interest over the next months. I will be bringing the concerns over increased hydro rates to the government's attention.

Health care is also a priority issue. I am a nurse. I've seen the system operate from the outside and the inside. I've worked as a nurse in the United States and in Ontario. Our system is one of the best in the world, but it is not perfect. I work in Ross Memorial Hospital in Lindsay, where I specialize in intensive care. Right now we have a \$44-million expansion in progress. We have modern facilities in Haliburton and in Minden. We have nurse practitioners coming to Brock township, to Lindsay and to other parts of the riding. We have a CAT scan in Lindsay now. We have heart catheterization in Peterborough. We had a commitment from the Minister of Health the other day of the continued new building of the hospital in Peterborough. We do hope he lives up to that promise. We'll be watching closely.

These have all been put in place by the previous Conservative government, and yes, they were Chris Hodgson and Gary Stewart initiatives of both those ridings. So our health care system has made great strides under the previous administration.

I got into politics originally as a candidate in the 2000 election, because I saw health care at the front line—I have family in the health system, and I knew we could do better. I had an opportunity to become involved in politics at the federal level and to try to make some changes. I can tell you that since my family were patients in hospitals and looking for long-term-care centres, the expansion of the long-term-care centres in my riding alone has increased immensely. Now there are not waiting lists anywhere near where they used to be for the long-term-care centres, so our seniors can get the care they do need. Please, we need to continue this. I want to work with this government and continue the good work that the former MPPs have done and the present ones on this side of the House want to continue to do in health care.

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We see expansion and improvements in health care every day. I want you to continue, not based on outdated ideologies but looking to the future of what could be the



best health care in Ontario, not the politically correct health care. We need more doctors and nurses in all our rural areas. In Lindsay alone, in the last two weeks we've heard of three family doctors leaving. I've been working with the community to encourage more doctors to come to rural Ontario. Our government laid some great groundwork for free tuition for doctors and nurses to come to underserved areas. I want to be watching closely to encourage more doctors into rural areas. I truly hope the new government will keep its promises on health care and not damage the system that we were making progress in.

The education system in my area is also important to my constituents. Progress on educational standards is moving forward, but stability is also critical to future progress. Our solution was to bring labour peace by banning teachers' strikes. Your government has rejected that as an option. I hope you're able to provide the important stability, which is required, through other means.

Your first steps in financial assistance to school boards have already been criticized in my area as bailouts to the big urban boards and little assistance to the equally important rural boards. Equality for all students across Ontario was a hallmark of our government.

In my riding, we saw additions to our rural schools and we saw a new high school in Lindsay. Sir Sandford Fleming College is continuing with a \$27.4-million expansion. I invite all of you to come to the Frost campus in Lindsay to see the modern, updated, energy-efficient campus that is there. I'll be speaking more about it in the new year, as it progresses. We have a new expansion in Haliburton at Sir Sandford Fleming College which is going to be a big boost to the economy and culture of the area. We need to continue to ensure that this is a cornerstone of the future, that the educational system is maintained.

Another issue specific to my region is municipal restructuring. A non-binding referendum was held on November 10 in which the people chose to re-examine the municipal boundaries issue. I hope that this government acts swiftly to address these concerns and works closely with the newly elected council toward a positive outcome. I want to congratulate all the newly elected councillors, mayors and reeves in all of my riding. The tradition in our family does continue, as my brother, Guy Scott, was elected as a councillor for Galway-Cavendish council in Peterborough county, one of the many.

**Interjection:** Kinmount's going to take over.

**Ms Scott:** Kinmount produces a lot of politicians, like Barry's Bay there, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

In its throne speech, the government emphasized the importance of democratic renewal. I sincerely hope that this renewal is aimed at benefiting all the members of this House and the people of Ontario. Already, this government has weakened democratic renewal in this chamber by ignoring the 15% of the population who voted on October 2 for my colleagues in the New Demo-

cratic Party. They're being denied official party status in this chamber by the government. Fair treatment of these members is an important symbol of your commitment to democratic renewal, and so far this government is shown to be lacking.

As well, the standing committee on government agencies, where I have been selected to participate on behalf of my party, has become another symbol of anti-democratic tactics by your government. It has long been a tradition in this House for the Chair of that committee not to be a member of the governing party. Last week, your government broke that tradition to appoint your own member to the Chair of the committee. This can hardly be progress on democratic renewal. I hope that in the months to come your actions on democratic renewal in this place match your rhetoric, because the loser in these battles will not be the members—

**Mr O'Toole:** The people of Ontario.

**Ms Scott:** —but the people of Ontario. Thank you, member from Durham.

I would once again like to thank the constituents of my riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for electing me. I would like to thank my colleagues on this side of the Legislature for welcoming me into their caucus and showing me the ropes. I can appreciate the new members; it's quite a learning experience and becomes loud and boisterous at times. I plan on bringing forward the concerns of my riding. I want to work hard and productively, adding my opinions on issues vital to this great province and to my riding.

I look forward to working with members of the government and with the New Democratic Party. I think we can work well together when we move things forward.

I hope and pray that I can live up to the expectations of the constituents in Haliburton-Victoria-Brock.

**Mr Dunlop:** When is the Kinmount Fair?

**Ms Scott:** I invite you all to the Kinmount Fair every Labour Day weekend.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Churley:** We're on another maiden speech. Are there any more coming tonight? Ah, a lot.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** No, you've spoken before.

It was again really pleasant to hear a bit of background about one of the new members in this Legislature, whom I really haven't had the opportunity to get to know yet or speak with, to find out about her background and her riding.

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** She must be good.

**Ms Churley:** Yes. She's very good. Also, as the member for Don Valley West said earlier, it's good that we've had some women elected too. We don't have nearly enough. Anybody who survived—not only survived, but she's a new member, elected in a Liberal sweep—has got to have a lot going for her. So I congratulate her and look forward to working with her as well.



She did talk about some of the policies of the Liberal government. I have to say to her that I don't agree with her on many of the Tory positions, as she well knows. I agree with the Liberals on the private school tax and always have.

When you talk about seniors, I think we would all agree that too many of our seniors are living in poverty and we need to do something about it. But I believe that giving them a tax break on something as fundamental as the education of our children—I'm a grandma. I believe I should be contributing to the education of my grandchildren, and I believe, as all grandparents believe, that we should do that.

I'm not poor. I know many older people who are who want to pay into the education system. They also want to make sure that when these children grow up, they're going to be willing to pay for our health care as we get older and older and need their support.

Although we don't agree on many of the issues, I look forward to working with the member.

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**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** It's a real pleasure to sit and listen to members in this House make their maiden speech. I say that because I hear from a lot of the debate that there are some incredible values that everyone brings to this chamber.

Listening to the member from Don Valley West, as I said, it's an inspiring commentary to listen to the words and to the commitment and the sincerity.

Listening to the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, I have to say that it is interesting to listen to some really good comments about some of the ideals and also to listen to the places from which you come and how proud one is of the area that you represent. On the other hand, it's also important to remember that the government has a responsibility, and that responsibility is to lay out for the people of Ontario where it is going. That is what the throne speech is about: It's about the vision and it's about where we're going to be in the long term.

What is harder to do in a throne speech that takes a little bit more courage is to speak candidly to the people of the province about the issues that the government has to face. That's what our throne speech did: It presented the straight goods to the people of Ontario.

So I'm going to sit and listen to more maiden speeches this evening with great interest. I thank the new members for their inspiring words, because someone like myself who's been here for a little bit longer than four years needs to hear your inspiring words.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** It's my pleasure to join in the debate tonight. I'd like to congratulate our new member, one of the two new Conservative members in the Legislature, Laurie Scott, on her maiden speech. Congratulations, Laurie, member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, who I think is going to do just a wonderful job here in the Ontario Legislature. She follows in the tradition—her father was a member at Ottawa for 28 years. This is year one for Laurie. I'm sure she's just getting warmed up for 27 years here at Queen's Park.

Laurie spoke from the heart about what's really important in her riding. She talked about the farmers whom she's going to be looking out for. She talked about the tourist operators—particularly close to my heart, seeing I am a tourist operator from Muskoka—and I know she'll be looking out for their interests.

She noted a couple of the many broken promises from the Liberal government: the hydro rates—of course, they said they were going to cap electricity prices at 4.3 cents, and that has fallen by the wayside. They said they weren't going to raise taxes. What are we going to see? A 27% increase in corporate taxes for medium-sized businesses in the province, something I'm particularly worried about. She talked about reliability of electricity and how important that is in a rural riding. I know a lot of my constituents are also voicing concerns about that.

She talked about health care and, coming from a health care field as a nurse, about how important that is and all the improvements we've seen under the past MPP, a fine MPP, Chris Hodgson. Someday maybe we can talk a bit—representing a different riding, of course, but coming back here to this place. She talked about the many new long-term-care beds that have been built in her riding.

I'd just like to congratulate Laurie. I know she's going to do an excellent job representing the people in her riding for many, many years to come. Thank you very much.

**Mr Bisson:** I want to congratulate the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. First of all, to be elected as a Conservative in the last election—now, think about that—first time out says a couple of things. I think it says something about her individually, but I think it also says something about her constituency. I don't know how long Haliburton-Victoria-Brock has been in Tory hands, but I remember once upon a time holding that for a short while, from 1990 to about 1993, when Mr Drainville sat as a New Democrat in that riding. When he left, it was won by Mr Hodgson. So I just want to say to her, your comments are well taken.

I also want to say, I remember her father somewhat—not in detail, but I do remember a Mr Scott who sat in the federal House, who was in his own way a bit of a legend—well, not in his own way; he was a legend within the riding. I think when you come from a political family that has had the opportunity to serve and you've built up a bit of a dynasty as far as putting together the organization and stuff, it obviously serves you well. I know being elected, I'm the first in my dynasty. It'll probably be the last one. I don't think either of my daughters wants to get into politics, neither Natalie or Julie, but who knows?

I certainly say that it's not an easy life that you chose. You know well what you had to go through as a youngster or an older person growing up as the daughter of a person who was in politics. You understand the sacrifices that your father made; now you understand the sacrifice you may very well have to make.

I also want to commend you on your comments about democracy, because I think that is really what is essential



about this whole place: making sure that this Parliament, this Legislature, works in an effective way. I think that your comments are well taken in regard to the role that all of the opposition parties have to play here at Queen's Park in order to keep this particular government accountable.

So I want to commend you on your maiden speech. I certainly don't think it's going to be your last, and judging from the amount of time that riding has been Tory, you'll probably be around for a little while.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response from the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock.

**Ms Scott:** Thank you very much to everyone in the House for their patience in my maiden speech. I appreciate that greatly. I want to thank the members for Toronto-Danforth, Sarnia-Lambton, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Timmins-James Bay for their comments.

I believe I am the first woman provincially elected from my riding, so I thank you for that comment. Somehow, through the campaign trail and through life, I just forget that little gender issue.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Scott:** I am.

The comment certainly of being born to a political family, I was two years old when my dad was elected and I don't think that I have ever stopped campaigning, in one sense or another, through fairs and on horses and through the community. I don't think he could wait until we were of driving age so that we could drive him around the riding. I remember many fall fairs and being put on merry-go-rounds for two hours at a time while my father socialized. My nieces are trying to get used to that, that you talk a lot when you go out in public. But that is what you are there to do, to listen to the people in the riding.

I appreciate your comments about Chris Hodgson. Chris's family was in the riding for generations. His grandfather Clay Hodgson taught my father the art of politics way back before I can remember. I know that Chris was very close to my dad while he was starting his provincial adventure. So the generations have come, and I want to thank Chris for all his help and mentorship throughout the campaign.

I look forward to serving the people. Certainly in our family, community service is a way of life. It was just something you got used to. You were always in your communities throughout a big riding, but I think our house is still the number that people call for all kinds of help. Being a nurse, you certainly get the medical phone calls also. So between medicine and politics, I look forward to helping the constituents in the riding and working with everyone in the Legislature.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** I rise this evening to speak on the speech from the throne. But before doing so, I would like to bring Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh into this House. The word is Charlottenburgh. I know many people have a difficult time with that word, but I think before the evening is over you will know about Charlottenburgh.

I am overwhelmed and elated to stand before you as the elected member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, and I thank the constituents for their trust and support.

As an educator for the past 32 years, I conducted semi-annual trips to Toronto with my students and toured the halls of this great building. I would advise them that they could realize their dreams and that their potential would eventually lead them to this chamber some day. I pledge to these students that I will keep this seat warm until the day when one of them will follow their dreams and take my place.

The riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh has been represented by a multitude of qualified and distinguished members. In the east, as the former riding of Cornwall, Premier John Sandfield Macdonald, Ontario's first Premier, George Samis and Fern Guindon all fought for our area. In the west, Premier James Pliny Whitney represented Dundas county in the early 1900s. As the former riding of Glengarry, a dynasty was formed when both Osie and Noble Villeneuve served for 47 years combined. The late Peter Manley, who taught me so much about politics, served the riding of Stormont during the 1950s.

For the past 16 years, our Liberal colleague John Cleary had the privilege of representing our riding. Mr Cleary was deeply tied to the community and worked diligently for our community's agricultural businesses, indeed serving as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food in the Peterson Liberal government.

## 2020

Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is a diversity of communities, industry and beauty. Being at the crossroads of eastern Ontario—the hub in the wheel, so to speak, between our nation's capital, our province's capital and Montreal—our riding is historically and culturally rich and is entrenched with a diverse population and history. Spanning over 2,500 square kilometres and inhabited by about 95,000 people, my riding is one of the larger ones in the province. Manufacturing is our area's main employer, with a thriving agricultural sector that specializes in dairy and agri-products. However, there is much more to my riding than simply statistics and figures.

We are largely a rural riding. Our east end, Charlottenburgh, encompasses progressive agricultural businesses, beautiful countryside along the St Lawrence River and a real awareness for the future.

The "Souths"—both Dundas and Stormont, which are parallel to the St Lawrence River—inhabit plentiful communities and hamlets and are home for our urban centre, the city of Cornwall. Cornwall is at the core of the riding, having been settled in 1784 by a strong group of Loyalist inhabitants quickly followed by an ambitious and dynamic francophone population. This has led to the rich and diverse cultural heritage that the city enjoys today. Moreover, the south of the riding is home to our First Nations inhabitants, who built communities along the St Law-



rence River, in the Long Sault Rapids area. Today, they continue to showcase a proud heritage in the community of Akwesasne.

The “Norths”—again, Dundas and Stormont—are showcased with progressive dairy farms, picturesque agricultural scenery and stately country homes. In fact, the north is home to Canada’s dairy capital, also known as the town of Winchester.

Our riding has a great history, St Raphaels being the home, and St Andrews West being the final resting place of Ontario’s first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald. His historic inn, now Quinn’s Inn, which he had built in the historic village of St Andrews West in 1865, was the location for the unveiling of our Liberal platform piece, Growing Strong Rural Communities.

The Lost Villages Museum, located in my hometown of Long Sault, chronicles and documents the planned flooding of six communities inundated by the St Lawrence Seaway and hydro projects in 1954. The lost villages of Mille Roches, Moulinette, Wales, Dickenson’s Landing, Farran’s Point and Aultsville, the hamlets of Maple Grove, Santa Cruz and Woodlands, and the farming communities of Sheek’s Island and Croil’s Island were lost to these great engineering projects. Through the museum, these villages stay alive through memories and memorabilia of their former residents, which include my family.

Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is a hub of recreational activities and tourist attractions. Our riding is home to Upper Canada Village, “where history is made”; the St Lawrence bikeway, which spans 44 kilometres along the St Lawrence River; Crysler Park; the Long Sault Parkway; Woodlands campsite and picnic area; the annual Dairy Fest in Winchester; Tubie races in Morrisburg; and Canada’s oldest fair, in Williamstown, just to name a few. In the city of Cornwall on any given day, you can watch sports teams or see the Cornwall Colts playing in the Ed Lumley arena at the Cornwall Civic Complex or catch a race at the Cornwall Motor Speedway, play some water sports at Crysler Park or Gray’s Creek Marina, or play a couple of holes at some of our area’s premier golf links.

Evidently, our riding is much more than statistics. From east to west, and from north to south, the people of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh are eager and ready to begin the journey that will improve our social services, stabilize our economy, help us develop world-class hospitals and schools, and allow our people and riding to grow and prosper.

Now to the speech from the throne. “Let’s get to work”: With these four words of closing, the speech from the throne resonated the sense of change that our team disseminated throughout the campaign, which I can sense here in the halls of Queen’s Park as well as back home in my great riding. Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is ready and eager to grow. We are ready, and have been waiting for someone to guide us on how to get to work. We are a resilient community, and under a McGuinty government we will diversify our economy and invest in our people.

As one of the ridings in Ontario with a minimal post-secondary-educated population, I am committed to making certain that the citizens of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh receive and have access to both quality education and funds to further their education.

Rural schools are in need of special care, as is exemplified at Rothwell-Osnabruck School in Ingleside, where children are taught from junior kindergarten to grade 12. With the previous government, the funding formula certainly put our rural schools in jeopardy, and some closed. As a former reeve of the township of South Stormont, I remember the times I attended meetings and fought for our schools, especially our rural schools, and for Rothwell-Osnabruck in particular.

Under a McGuinty government, my community applauds our caucus’s commitment to working with communities, parents and children to ensure that our schools truly are the world’s best.

Le gouvernement McGuinty va tenir ses promesses. Il va s’assurer que la communauté francophone de Cornwall et de toute la région de Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh reçoive la qualité d’éducation qui leur est due.

In Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, and indeed throughout Ontario, we are ecstatic that the McGuinty government is committed to all Ontario children, from preschool education opportunities to giving students a second chance, as with the alternative education at our T.R. Leger School.

At the post-secondary level there are some real restrictions for students from my riding. Without a degree-granting institution in the riding, many students who have wished to achieve a university degree have had difficulty in doing so. Many students have had dreams dashed because of lack of funds, compounded by the lack of affordable housing at post-secondary institutions. I strongly support, and will advocate for, our post-secondary institutions.

St Lawrence College in my riding, which offers students of my community the necessary skills training and education needed to boost our economy, is an institute with which I will continue to work with my utmost interest and support. I laud Volker Thomsen, president, and Patrick Finucan, executive director, for their vision of the future of renewable energy and the program initiated thereof, and I encourage them to continue with the vision to having this institute become a degree-granting facility.

Our government realizes that post-secondary education programs and education equal prosperity, and my riding anticipates the long-term plan that will ensure accessibility to post-secondary education for future generations.

In smaller communities there are unique challenges we must face in terms of providing health care services. Recruitment of health care personnel, as well as raising resources, is challenging. Our riding will rise to and has risen to this challenge. A case in point is the Winchester District Memorial Hospital in rural Dundas county,



where almost \$13 million has been raised in the Renewing the Vision Campaign. Moreover, in Cornwall, where the hospital governance issue has been resolved, we must move on with a made-in-Cornwall plan for acute and chronic long-term care, and cut through the previous government's red tape, which stalemated our hospital restructuring project.

Our government's commitment to health care and our pledge to keep private business out of the health care realm and invest in a new, fully government-funded facility in eastern Ontario are the key to providing quality universal care for both Ontarians and the people of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I celebrate this commitment and pledge to fight for all necessary health services for our community, such as home care and long-term care. In these two sectors of health care, we must work diligently and treat our seniors—our frail and elderly—and all others requiring such care with the compassion and dignity they deserve.

There has been much debate in this House over Ontario's energy future. Moving toward renewable energy sources and increasing conservation opportunities are of utmost importance in Ontario. Ensuring that Ontario, and Ontarians, have a sufficient supply of energy is a key component in our government's plan to stabilize and renew confidence in our energy sector.

Citizens of my riding have told me that our children and grandchildren must not be held hostage to the energy debt of the present generation and that we must work diligently to paying our way regarding energy costs. May I say too that my riding is eager to aid our government and the people of Ontario in improving the quality of the air we breathe and developing a new market for our corn producers. Citizens are eager to see our community's ethanol project come to fruition, and they look forward to contributing to this important project—in fact, many have already done so.

2030

Our agricultural communities deserve the respect and care from government and people who know and understand the producers of its bread and butter. They want to know, when crises occur, that the resources are in place to assist them and that the rules and regulations are firm but fair. As a case in point, the agricultural community knows that nutrient management is important to the producers and citizens of this great province. The agricultural community knows too that all Ontarians benefit from these new rules and all Ontarians should be part of the solution.

Evidently, the riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is ready to grow under a McGuinty government. Being strategically placed in eastern Ontario and having the workforce, community and drive to change, we are prepared and equipped to become a genuine force in the Ontario economy. In order to truly grow, we must improve the transportation links to the hub that I alluded to at the beginning of my presentation. I shall work, as I have done in the past, with local communities, businesses, the chambers of commerce, city, county and

township councils and Team Cornwall to ensure that our riding grows and prospers and that new and modern links are made in transportation and telecommunications. Under a McGuinty government, we will have the tools necessary to achieve our goals as a community: better social service and responsible governance.

My great-great-great grandfather, John Brownell, was elected in 1808 to the fifth Parliament of Upper Canada, representing the people of Osnabruck, a township that disappeared due to amalgamation in 1998. If I could just digress for a moment, it was in January 1998 during that horrendous ice storm that we brought together the township of Osnabruck and the township of Cornwall, where I had served as reeve. We saw those two communities and townships disappear, only to become the great township of South Stormont. Alluding to John Brownell, to say that governing in his time was demanding and arduous is almost certainly an understatement. But these great forefathers of ours paved the way for representing our riding and the people of Ontario, something that I hope one of my students or relatives may say some day of me.

I believe in change—I said that during the campaign. I was proud to go out and express the thoughts that were contained in Excellence for All, Growing Strong Communities and the like. I believe our government will make a difference. I believed it then, I believed it on the campaign trail and I believe it now. I believe that we can and will renew confidence and work for Ontarians in order to deliver high-quality social services, fiscal responsibility and accountable government.

I look forward to my time here at Queen's Park. I look forward to my time here in the House. I look forward to working with my colleagues, so many of whom have welcomed me to this House and helped me to develop my questions during question period and in my work in presenting a bill to this House. I look forward to the years ahead as we work to fulfill the promises we made in those party platforms.

Mr Speaker, I thank you, I thank this House and I thank the people in this House. I look forward to working for Ontarians and the people of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for the next four years.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):**

As a fellow new member, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for his maiden voyage here this evening. Incidentally, I was presented with a copy of the book, "Voices from the Lost Villages," at a recent engagement in Cornwall. I want to congratulate him on his work on that society as well. From the brief time I've had to interact with the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, I know he's going to be a strong contributor to this House for a long time.

As for his party's speech from the throne, I'm somewhat less charitable. You all know the story of Christopher Columbus. This speech from the throne reminds me of Christopher Columbus. You see, Christopher Columbus was the first Liberal. If you ask me why, I'll tell



you: Christopher Columbus had no idea where he was going, and when he got there, he had no idea what he was going to do, but he did it all on other people's money. That's what this government wants to do with the throne speech they've presented to this House.

The honourable member talks about his municipality being the place where they tabled the pamphlet *Building Strong Communities*. Well, I believe that pamphlet must have got lost with those villages in the St Lawrence Seaway, because this government says nothing about rural Ontario in this throne speech. I for one am very concerned about where rural Ontario is going to stand on their list of priorities. I am a member who comes from a rural riding, and my constituents are worried about where they sit on the list of priorities with this government. I'll be articulating that on a continuous basis in the future.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** It was indeed a pleasure to listen to the maiden speech of the new member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. It was a good maiden speech. It was full of hope and full of promise and full of the vigour of a brand new member in this House. I congratulate him for still having that sense of hope and that sense of vigour after a month. It has not been knocked out of you yet, and I hope it never will be.

But as I listen to you, although I could remember back to my first days in this House, you said a couple of things that I think need to be commented on.

The first was your hope for education. We in this House, I believe, all have great hope for education. We all hope that the education our children and our grandchildren have in this province will be a much better education than those unfortunates who happen to have been in the school system for the last eight years. I hope you will be able to deliver a sense of purpose to the education system, and I hope your government will move very quickly to restore the funds, so that children can expect the same decency in education that they once had.

I listened to you talk about hospital health care. Of course, we in this House all believe we must have a much better hospital system. We have seen that hospital system, although it has received some small pittances over the last number of years, really decline as waiting lists grew, hospital staff grew fewer in number and people had to go to the United States or to other places to get the services they needed. I will tell you that we will work with you to do that.

Last but not least, I must mention that you talked about amalgamation. This is the very first time I have ever heard amalgamation of any towns or cities in this province lauded. I don't know what they have done, whether they did it right or wrong or the people really wanted it, but I will tell you it was far, far different from what I have ever heard before. I need to learn more about what went right in an amalgamation in Ontario, because we've never heard that before.

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** On behalf of all the members of our caucus, I too want to congratulate the member for his maiden speech. I've learned more about your riding in the last few minutes than I

knew. I think you've been able to share that with all of us.

It was interesting to hear the member of the loyal opposition talk about Christopher Columbus. I can only say, where would we all be without Columbus? I don't think any of us would be here. That's because Christopher Columbus was an interesting man. He decided to do something that conventional wisdom said could not be done. Every so often you have to change course, and people have told us they definitely want to see the course of this government change from that of previous governments of this province.

**2040**

Particularly, I want to congratulate my colleague, who like myself is a new member, on being able to introduce his private member's bill. What a great honour for a new member, I'm sure all members of the House would agree, to have unanimous consent for a private member's bill so that this province will have Ontario Heritage Day in the month of June. I think that's a wonderful idea, and I think it's a testament to his ability to understand what we all are in this House and how we do want to work together on many issues.

I think I can tell the other members that the new member has a strong voice in our caucus. The people of his riding should know they've been able to elect somebody who articulates the position of his riding and that he's a very fair-minded person. In this place, that is an attribute—there are many in this House who, I think, are not fair-minded but tend to be more partisan than fair. I know that in our new caucus we are looking for people who bring experience from their previous careers in municipal politics and other careers. On behalf of all of us, I just want to say, well done.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh on his maiden speech in the House. It reminded me a little bit—if you get a chance to look in Hansard—if when your predecessor, Mr Cleary, made his final statement in the House. He talked about his years in politics. I'd ask you to look this up at some point. One of the things I found amusing about that speech was that he actually said his wife wouldn't let him run for one more term—if he ran again, he'd be campaigning alone, because she'd be working for the opposition. I really liked John Cleary, and I want to pass that on to you. He was a very valuable member of this Legislature, and as your predecessor, he's probably passed on a lot of valuable information to you.

I also got an opportunity to meet our candidate in that area, a fellow by the name Todd Lalonde. He seems like really nice guy, and I congratulate you on your victory over Todd. I did want to say, very briefly, that last year in the throne speech consultation we did in the spring, I was actually up in the Cornwall area, back in April and May, and did some throne speech consultations for then-Premier Eves. One of the things I thought I'd pass on to you was that the business community I talked to in the Cornwall area was very enthusiastic about a program our



government put in place, the RED program, Rural Economic Development. I know some people from the economic development community were there and talked to us about the value of that program and how that was a major concern, keeping young people in that rural community. I hope you can carry on the tradition of John Cleary, and I look forward to your comments.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Mr Brownell:** I would first like to thank the members from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Beaches-East York, Perth-Middlesex and Simcoe North for their words of encouragement with regard to what I did in this House this evening. I appreciate that very much.

Just to take three words that the member from Beaches-East York mentioned, "sense of hope"—yes, I came here with a sense of hope, and I still have a great sense of hope. Having been raised in a family of 12 children—and yes, my mother is watching on television tonight back home—I remember that she always instilled in us that drive and that desire and that sense of hope that, yes, we could do it.

I shall never wane in my desire to produce for my riding, to produce for Ontarians and to speak out on those issues that I feel are so important: those issues that were contained in Excellence for All; those issues that were contained in The Health Care We Need, my wife being a retired health care provider; and in Growing Strong Communities—I shall never forget when Dalton McGuinty came to my riding to present Growing Strong Communities. There were great ideas. I know we have great financial burdens right now, and we will overcome those burdens and get on with what we have said we will do. Those planks are firm; we will carry on those planks. I look forward to working with my colleagues in delivering in the next four years.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Klees:** I'm pleased to rise this evening and join the debate on the throne speech. I want, first of all, to say that I've enjoyed the presentations tonight, particularly the maiden speeches. It's refreshing to hear about the motivation behind everyone who comes to this place. I don't for a minute believe there's anyone in this place who doesn't come here with an absolute commitment and desire to make Ontario a better place. We all have that in common, regardless of which party we represent.

We do have a different way of getting there. There are different views; there are different philosophies; there are different attitudes toward economic policy and different attitudes toward social policy—some we have had experience with in this province. We all well recall the years under the former Liberal and NDP regimes, which we refer to as the lost decade in Ontario, a period of time that took us through a lot of experiments in terms of public policy. What was learned through that period of time was that you couldn't be all things to all people. As much as you might want to continue to feed special interest groups and as much as you might want to respond to demands for additional resources by various well-meaning groups, there are limited resources in this

province. As a result, we have to be careful where we spend our money. That's a responsibility that governments have.

We had the opportunity as well in this province, between 1995 and 2003, to have a government that believed very firmly in fiscal responsibility: We could not spend more than we had, and we had to rein in a lot of the demands and a lot of the spending that would otherwise have continued. That government, of which I was proud to be a part, also believed very strongly in social responsibility: For those people who cannot help themselves, there is in fact a responsibility on the part of government to look after their needs.

As we look at those eight years of Conservative government in this province, it's very interesting to see that spending on health care increased by billions of dollars, spending on education increased by billions of dollars—there was no neglect of those needs in this province.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Klees:** The Minister of Education, who is here tonight, laughs at that. I ask him to look very carefully at precisely where the investments took place in the last number of years in this province. The priorities were health care and education, and there is evidence of that across this province.

I find the throne speech we're debating tonight interesting. I'm going to read directly from the throne speech that was read to us by the Lieutenant Governor. Here's what the throne speech, no doubt authored by the Premier's office, said: "There have been pulls on the seams in our social fabric—but this fabric has refused to tear." Precisely. And why did it refuse to tear? Because of the strength in this province, a very strong province. It didn't gather that strength by accident. It was a result of eight strong years in this province, fiscally responsible government that gave this province the strength and the stability to withstand some of those tears that came our way.

**2050**

I read on: "There have been challenges to the health of our economy—but this economy remains strong." This, after eight years of Conservative government in this province. Even the Lieutenant Governor, in reading the throne speech, no doubt authored by Dalton McGuinty and his advisors, had to admit that while there were challenges to the economic health of this province, nevertheless this economy remains strong.

"There have been those," the throne speech continues, "who would dismiss our values as out of date—but these values have proven timeless." Indeed they have. The values that we speak of in this province, that in fact have made this province great, are the values of a belief in the responsibility that individuals have in our society to do what they can do to look after their own needs; the values of a work ethic, that those who have the ability to work must in fact do that to contribute to society; the values of the opportunity to create wealth, not for the sake of creating wealth but for the good you can do through the creation of wealth; the values of social responsibility, that we indeed look after those who cannot help themselves,



as that's the role of the collective, of government. Those values have been time-honoured in this province. We, over eight years, in fact strengthened our economy in a very carefully designed economic strategy that would free up the economy, that would allow those entrepreneurs and those corporations and those businesses that choose to do business in this province to invest so that additional jobs were created, so that the many who were not able to find work in those years leading up to 1995 could find jobs.

There were many thousands of people—I remind the people not only here in the Legislature but across this province—who, prior to 1995 and before a strategy that actually recognized how important it was to create a competitive environment so that businesses would invest here and would be prepared to expand so that jobs would be created, were trapped on welfare. Those shackles were taken off those people through what? Through the creation of jobs so that now those people have the opportunity to earn an income. They have the dignity of a job. They continue to contribute to this strong economy that this throne speech referred to.

I find it interesting that in the course of this election campaign, many, in fact all of the members opposite on the government side—I'm certain that as they read those campaign commitments, as they travelled across their constituencies, they believed 100% that the promises they were making to the people of this province would be kept. And no doubt that's why they were passionate about carrying that message across their constituencies.

It would be very interesting to know what is going on in the minds of members of the backbench of the government as they hear their Premier and their finance minister and many of their cabinet now put the spin on the story as to why those commitments made in the course of the election campaign can't be kept.

I put a challenge out to members of the government backbench. Don't be drawn into the spin you're being given. What they're coming to realize is that that huge book of promises that was written was written by the same people who are now spinning them into excuses for not keeping those promises. This election campaign, on the part of this Liberal Party, was the biggest set-up that this province has ever seen. "Tell them what they want to hear. Tell them anything at all that will get their attention so they'll vote for you. Then, by the way, don't worry about it. We'll have an excuse as to why we can't deliver."

But the people of this province are catching on. Those excuses are wearing thin, because people are taking the time—whether it's a corporation, a small business or a large business in this province, or even a household—and are realizing, "We're only halfway through the fiscal year. How can these people tell us that there is a fiscal deficit when we still have five months to go to the end of the fiscal year?"

There isn't a business person in this province who, having incurred unexpected expenses in the course of doing business, doesn't understand that you then, before

the end of the fiscal year, take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that by the time you get to the end of the fiscal year you have a balanced budget, that your books are balanced, whether that's in your business or in your household.

In Ontario's case—I think it's important for people in Ontario to understand this—we had some unexpected challenges that we faced as the government of the day. There was SARS.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Klees:** The Minister of Education sarcastically says, "Excuses." As one who will be responsible for teaching character education, he should know that the first thing he should do is be honest with the people of this province and not refer to SARS as an excuse but as a reality that this government had to deal with. Many people across this province suffered, and for him to be sarcastic about that issue is shameful. That was precisely a challenge that we had to face, at a cost of many millions of dollars to this province.

Another challenge our government faced was mad cow disease. A third challenge we faced was the West Nile virus. In addition to that, we had an electricity blackout that affected the entire northeastern seaboard of this continent.

So with all these unexpected expenses, what was the challenge that the government of the day faced? Indeed, they had the challenge of looking to the end of the fiscal year and saying, "How do we balance the books, given all these unexpected expenses?"

I can tell you what our plan was. As a member who sat at the cabinet table, as a caucus member—and you yourself will remember, Speaker, because you were there—we understood that we had significant challenges. There wasn't a cabinet minister who was not given the responsibility to go back to their ministry to do a program review and to come in with a plan that would be that ministry's contribution to resolving the issue before the end of the fiscal year.

When we made the statement in the course of our election campaign that the budget would be balanced, it was said with the full commitment that we were prepared to take the courageous decisions to do exactly that.

In this House even today, earlier, I asked the question of the Premier: Did he at any time give direction to his Minister of Finance and to the ministers of the crown to go to work and to bring in a fiscal plan that would balance the budget at the end of this year? On six different occasions I asked the question in six different ways in question period today. Not once was the Premier of this province capable of saying, "Yes, I instructed my Minister of Finance to come in with a balanced budget by the end of the year."

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Why? Can you for one minute imagine why the Premier would not have charged his Minister of Finance with that responsibility, given that he made the commitment on the campaign trail that he would balance the budget?



Members of the backbench of this government know full well why. They're starting to understand the strategy of the Liberal Party as it took them for a ride through the election campaign. Not one of the backbenchers of this Liberal government clued in at any point along the way. If they had, they would have bailed, because I believe they're all honourable members.

What they are coming to realize is that they were taken for a ride. They were told in this book of promises, "We will deliver this to the people of Ontario." They now are realizing that they have to go back to their constituents and make an explanation as to why what was being promised would never be capable of being delivered. It's a sad day, because each day as these members come into this place they realize that they have made a commitment to their constituents that they can't keep and that the people on the front benches knew they couldn't keep. That's a hard road, my friends. You've got four years left of trying to justify that to your constituents. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes. You may be in the government, but I can tell you, the record you will have four years from now will be very difficult to justify.

As to the fat cats that you say you have rolled back tax deductions for, the fat cats that you're increasing corporate taxes for, I ask you to remember that those fat cats are your neighbours. Those so-called fat cats are people who employ your children and who create jobs for graduating students in this province. You will find out what happens when the tax environment in this province becomes uncompetitive with our competing jurisdictions. You heard the federal Prime Minister say just this week that no, he will not roll back tax deductions, and in making that statement, he made it very clear why. He made it very clear that he believes that Canada's tax environment must be competitive not only with our neighbouring jurisdictions but globally.

I submit to you that this throne speech that we're debating today had it absolutely right when, in its preamble, it made reference to the strong values of Ontario, made reference to the fact that we have a very strong economy and made reference to the fact that the people of this province have values that have stood the test of time. What this throne speech, however, continues to do—and in the ensuing days to that throne speech, we have come to realize that this government never had any intention of keeping these promises. This throne speech, I believe, will be the government members' worst nightmare, and the reason for that is that the well-intentioned promises that were made here are being broken one day at a time.

The people of this province will not forget that the very political party that said, "We are going to do politics differently. We will open it up. We will make it obvious to people in this province that we will do politics differently"—they have. They are doing it very differently from our government over a period of eight years.

One thing that people had said and continue to say about the eight years of government under a Conservative Party in this province is, "I may not have agreed with

everything they did, but I respect the fact that they did what they said they were going to do." The legacy of the Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty will be that, "They promised us the world and gave us nothing but broken promises." The people of this province will not forget.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr Prue:** As always, it is a pleasure to listen to the member from Oak Ridges. He speaks very well. He is erudite. He is not always passionate in what he says, but he is always clear and articulate. But there were two things he talked about that I really feel I must comment on.

The first one was about the hydro system and the blackout and about how he and his government at the time found themselves in the situation of an almost universal blackout on the east coast of North America. But the reality is that his government had to take at least some of the blame for that blackout. Although it originated in the United States, we were at that time importing hydro, we were at that time totally tied into the grid, we were at that time unable to supply our own domestic demands, and we found ourselves, when they went down, going down with them.

It is instructive to note that the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec, which were both exporting hydro at that time, did not find themselves in anywhere near the same dilemma—in fact, found themselves in no dilemma at all. I think that history must bear witness to the fact that when you find yourself deficient, as that government made us, you have the consequences.

The second comment I have to make is on his budget, where he admonished this new government for not being able to come to terms with a \$5.6-billion deficit in some five months in the balance of this fiscal year. He said that you should have been courageous. Well, I really must state for the record that yes, you could be courageous if you dealt with that, but I would suggest that the Conservatives would have been even more courageous had they, in the weeks and months leading up to the election, admitted that they were running a \$5.6-billion deficit. Had they told the people of Ontario what they were willing to cut, had they told the people what they were willing to do, had they told the people what taxes they were going to need to raise—I would suggest that that should have been part of the statement as well.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I thank the member from Oak Ridges for his analysis of the government's throne speech. The member from Oak Ridges is a man of conviction. He is a man of passion for what he believes in and in what he represents. The member from Oak Ridges truly believes every word he says. The people of Ontario believe otherwise. The people of Ontario chose change and they chose change in a government of men and women capable of delivering that change and of formulating it and delivering it over the next four years.



The member addresses the new members. He asks us to consider what he calls the platform we have inherited. I have had the privilege of sitting through the policy sessions in which that platform came together. I know how that platform came together. I participated in those discussions. I contributed some of those ideas. That is my platform. Those are the ideals I believe in. Those are the things I stood for. Those are the things that voters in Mississauga West voted for.

The member talks about keeping promises. The member refers to the promises that the former government kept. Did the previous government promise to close hospitals? They surely did. Did they promise to look the other way as our drinking water and our meat went bad? They surely did. Did they promise to keep the weakest members of our society down or to make sure that our elderly lived in nursing homes that are a disgrace? This surely happened on their watch. Did the previous government promise to hand over nuclear inspection to a private company that assembles components for the very reactors that they now ask it to oversee? This they surely did.

This is a new government, a government that comes in with hope and promise, and a government that will, over four years, deliver on those promises to the people of Ontario.

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**Mr Yakabuski:** I too want to thank the member for Oak Ridges for his comments and analysis on the throne speech. The member for Oak Ridges has a great deal of experience and understanding of what has happened in this province in the past several years. I think the members on the opposite side would do well to listen to him.

This government's throne speech, and I'll paraphrase part of it, says, "We didn't get the job we wanted." What this government really wants is to be on the opposition side so it can freewheel and not accept the responsibilities that have been bestowed upon it by the people of Ontario. It wants to bury its head in the sand and keep running and hiding from its responsibilities. Well, it's time to fess up. It's time to accept the job. It's there. You've got to stand up and do it now. You've got to stop talking about this phony deficit. You're basing everything on this phony \$5.6 billion that you are using as a justification for every broken promise.

When Mike Harris was elected in 1995, his throne speech pretty much mirrored the platform that he ran on. This throne speech is a complete abdication of the platform that you ran on and won the favour of the people of the province of Ontario on. It's a complete 180-degree turn. Now we're going to be talking about—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Yakabuski:** Look, they even have to talk about that when someone else is speaking. The \$5.6 billion is a phony number. They're just using it. They've got to get on with the job and make sure that by March 31, 2004, this budget can be balanced. Fess up to the people of Ontario.

**Mr Bisson:** I listened in my office and was paying attention to my good friend Mr Klees in regard to his comments. I just want to say up front—I've said this in this debate already—the Tories can try all they want to say that the Liberals didn't have a deficit when they came to office, but the reality is that there was. You guys can cut that any way you try, but at the end of the day I agree partly with what the Liberals are saying, that the Tories, in the budget of last spring, first of all tried to do a budget outside of this House, they tried to do a budget at Magna. That blew up in your faces. The reason you wanted to be out at Magna was because you were trying to control the message. When you finally were forced to bring a budget to this House, that budget eventually went to the estimates committee. I sat there, along with Mr Phillips, now Chair of Management Board, who said that the budget was at least \$5 billion as a deficit at that point.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bisson:** Well, I agree with the Liberals. The Liberals are right: There was a deficit left by the Tories. The difference in the deficit as projected from the spring is a difference of from \$5 billion to \$5.6 billion. There was a deficit; you can't run away from that.

I do agree with the one point, that there are many things inside this throne speech that quite frankly are motherhood and apple pie when it comes to the Tories, and I just say, a Liberal is a Tory, a Tory is a Liberal, same thing—no difference where I come from. Where I think it's rather unfortunate—and I do agree with the member—is that the Liberals are trying to hide behind the so-called deficit in order to not deliver on their campaign promises. That's what this is all about. We all know that the Liberals are saying, "Oh God, we didn't know there was a deficit." Come on, who didn't know there was a deficit? The Tories were trying to hide it. The Liberals acknowledged it. We acknowledged it. The think-tanks around the province acknowledged it. What this is all about is an attempt by the Liberals to not deliver on their campaign promises and to hide behind the Tories as they do so.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response from the member from Oak Ridges.

**Mr Klees:** I want to thank my colleagues for their comments. With regard to the member from Mississauga West, I fully respect that he and others were involved in developing the platform. That wasn't the issue. There are many things in that platform that are excellent policies. The point I was making is that those who understood what in fact the resources of the province were knew full well that they would never be able to deliver on those promises. That is the issue; that's the point I was making, which obviously the member missed.

I thank the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for his comments. One of the things we will continue to do is remind the people of this province that the \$5.6-billion number that is constantly being drummed by this government is in fact a phony number. It is being used by the government to justify, as the member for Timmins-James Bay said, not keeping those promises. Somehow



this Liberal government has forgotten about SARS, the multi-millions of dollars that it cost this province to deal with that issue—by the way, the report that was being made, the Peters report, didn't take into consideration any of the funds that should have been and rightfully will be transferred from the federal government to the province, and all of the other issues. We never said there was not, at the time, a deficit; we said that there will be a balanced budget by the end of the fiscal year. Yes, a lot of those additional costs had in fact caused challenges. We were going to balance the budget by the end of the fiscal year. This government has a responsibility to balance the budget at the end of the fiscal year, rather than to stand behind this phony, bogus \$5.6-billion deficit—

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):**

Thank you, Speaker, and I even thank some of the opposition members for being here.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Hampton:** Well, some of the opposition members are here, and there are even a few of the government members, strange as that may seem.

I'm quite pleased to participate in this debate, because there's actually a lot that needs to be said. The first issue I want to deal with is that the Conservatives deny there is a budget deficit, and the Liberals claim to be surprised there's a budget deficit. No one should be surprised. I remember sitting in the estimates committee with the now Chair of Management Board, then a Liberal finance critic, who literally went through the numbers. He pointed out that an \$800-million contribution from the federal government for health care was not a foregone conclusion. He added up the SARS number; estimated it at about \$700 million. He agreed with me that a 1% drop in economic growth would mean a further \$640-million loss. He agreed with me that there was \$2 billion in the former government's budget that was supposed to be asset sales, supposed to be the sale of Hydro One, but we knew the announcement of the sale of Hydro One wasn't going to happen before the election. He and I agreed that there were \$700 million of in-year savings that hadn't been found. When you add all these numbers up, he said, there's a risk of a \$5-billion deficit. That was on June 3 of this year.

The now Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Mr Kwinter, told the Toronto Sun in August that it looked like there was at least a \$5-billion deficit. The Fraser Institute, no friends of mine, friends of yours and friends of yours, came out in the middle of the election campaign and said there's a deficit of at least \$4.5 billion. So for Conservatives to say, "There is no deficit" doesn't hold water. But equally, for Liberals to say, "Oh, what a surprise. There's a \$5-billion deficit" doesn't hold water either. All kinds of people, at least two people who are Liberal cabinet ministers now, knew there was a \$5-billion deficit, and your good friends, the Fraser Institute, indicated there was at least a budget deficit of \$4.5 billion.

**2120**

There's another reason why no one should be surprised that there's a budget deficit: There was a projected budget deficit last year. And how were the Conservatives going to deal with it? They were going to deal with it by asset sales of over \$2 billion and then some other in-year savings. When the sale of Hydro One didn't materialize, what the former government did is they took all of the so-called Romanow commission health care money that was to be accounted for over three or four years and they jammed it all into the 2002-03 budget to take away the reality of a budget deficit and to give the appearance of a balanced budget.

Go back a couple of years before that; go back to 1999. In 1999, it was apparent that there was a budget problem, and so what the former government did then is they sold off Highway 407 for \$3 billion and jammed all that money into one year in the budget, again to give the appearance of a balanced budget.

Sorry, folks. You can't say you're surprised that there was a budget deficit and you can't say you were surprised that it was a \$5-billion budget deficit. There were lots of warnings—warnings from Gerry Phillips, warnings from Monte Kwinter, warnings from the Fraser Institute. It's not going to wash.

On this side of the House, speaking for New Democrats, we understand the problem you're in. Having promised the sun, the moon and the stars during the election campaign, but also having promised, "We won't raise your taxes," and then having signed that silly taxpayer protection pledge, you're in a bind. You've got to find some convenient excuse to cover up the fact that you're not going to do any of these things. So the surprise \$5-billion deficit comes in handy.

I want to be very direct with people: That might get you out of a jam for the next five or six months, but it's not going to get you out of a jam for the next four years. The reality is this: If you look around North America, at other jurisdictions that went down the road of "A tax cut is the answer for every problem," they're all in serious budget difficulties now. George Bush took over as President of the United States three years ago with a \$200-billion surplus, immediately implemented the "A tax cut is the answer for every problem" agenda, and now he is looking at a \$400-billion-plus deficit, so a reversal of \$600 billion in less than three years. That's just one of the examples.

There are 44 states in the United States that went down the "A tax cut is the answer for every problem" road, and there are now 44 states in the United States that are laying off teachers, laying off firefighters, laying off police officers, laying off nurses. They've got the same problem. They signed on to the taxpayer protection pledge, the same one you guys signed on to. For everyone out there who may be watching tonight, here is the conundrum that the new Liberal government faces. They promised—in fact, I remember Mr McGuinty, with a big smile on his face, standing beside John Williamson. You know John Williamson, who usually speaks for the—



well, they were called Reform, then Canadian Alliance, now the Canadian Conservative Party. I remember Mr McGuinty standing there beside Mr Williamson signing the pledge that he would not raise any taxes and he would balance the budget. Somebody should have read for Mr McGuinty on that day, and read for Liberals, the fine print that comes along with that pledge, because the Canadian Taxpayers Federation spells out, when you read the fine print, all the things that go along with the pledge.

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** What do they say?

**Mr Hampton:** They say you should privatize health care. Oh, yes. I think that's where these P3 hospitals, the Liberal version of the P3 hospitals, comes in. They say that you should privatize a whole bunch of other services, like hydroelectricity. They say that you should implement cuts to a number of other social investments. That's the fine print that goes along with the Canadian taxpayers pledge that you signed. To draw the picture even a little more sharply, despite having promised that you'll put money into schools and cap class sizes, and despite having promised that you will put money into colleges and universities, into protecting water, into hiring 8,000 nurses, and into a number of other areas, you signed the Canadian taxpayers pledge, which says that you'll cut these things. In order to get a balanced budget, you'll cut, you'll privatize health care, you'll privatize things like hydroelectricity, you'll privatize other essential public services. That's your conundrum.

You may be able to hide behind your surprise at a \$5-billion deficit, as I say, for the next six months, but it won't last much longer than that. Sooner or later, you're going to have to say to the people of Ontario which pledge was the real pledge: the Canadian Taxpayers Federation pledge, which involves more P3 hospitals, selling off essential services like hydroelectricity, privatizing water? Which one will it be? Will it be more privatization or will it be more public investment? If it's going to be more public investment, where do you find the money? I too remember the ad that said, "I won't cut your taxes, but I won't raise your taxes."

That's where this debate is now going to unfold. I simply want to lay out for the people of Ontario what I think the new government should do, and what New Democrats are going to prod them to do.

Let's start from fundamental principles. The reality of living in the 21st century is this: Societies now are more highly organized than ever. You cannot operate large cities like Toronto or Hamilton or Ottawa or London or even Windsor without a public transit system. Telling people that everyone should rely on a car and find their own method of transportation is simply going to lead to all kinds of transportation inefficiency, all kinds of economic costs and all kinds of environmental and social costs. The best way to organize transportation in large urban populations is through public transit, public transportation, getting people to move by subways, by

buses, by streetcars, by GO trains, whatever. But that is going to require public investment.

Similarly with health care. We have essentially two choices in Ontario on the provision of health care. One choice is outlined for us in the United States. It is the choice which says that everyone is on their own, everyone has to find their own insurance. Those who can't afford it do without. Those who can afford it will pay sky-high private health insurance rates and, in many cases, get an inferior product. That's the private route. Some people who advocate the private route also advocate the P3 hospitals, advocate private home care, advocate more and more private long-term care, all of which we saw under the previous government, and which we're now seeing under your government.

The other option for health care is to recognize that we're all in this together, that health care is not an optional service, that it's absolutely essential for an organized society, and to recognize that the best way to do this, the most cost effective, the most efficient and fairest way to do it, is through a public system operating on a not-for-profit basis, where we all make a contribution through our taxes, but the benefit that we get individually and collectively is much greater than the contribution we may make through our taxes. Obviously, as a New Democrat I think the second choice—a public, not-for-profit system—is the best way to go. But one of the things that the people of Ontario will have to watch over the next year, year and a half, two years is which choice you make.

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The P3 hospitals are instructive here. People across Ontario need to watch these carefully, because I suspect that what we're going to get from the Liberal government is an announcement of more P3 hospitals. I want to say that the P3 hospitals are not novel. One of the first things that Margaret Thatcher did in Britain after her Conservative government took power there was to move away from public provision of health care, public financing of hospitals to private financing of the hospitals. Now in Britain there's at least a 10-year record of experience with private hospitals.

What they have found in Britain with the P3 hospitals, which are privately financed—a private corporation finances them, and many of the services that are operated are operated on a private, profit-driven basis—is that when you look back at the end of, say, a 10-year or 15-year period, you actually end up paying for the hospital twice. What that means for patient care, if you have to pay for the hospital twice because it's privately financed and because there are all kinds of profit measures in the hospital, is that you've denied a lot of money that should have gone to patient care.

The Conservative version of a P3 hospital in Ontario was essentially a lease-purchase. A private corporation would arrange for the financing and would pay a very high interest rate. A private corporation would build. They would want to make a profit on the financing. They would want to make a profit on the lease. They would



want to have, in the operation of the hospital, a number of privatized services, all of which were supposed to make a profit.

When you added in the additional financing costs, because a private corporation cannot get as good an interest rate as government can, and then you add in all of the profit-taking—on the lease, on the privatized services—you could very quickly see that that lease-purchase model of a P3 hospital, within 10 or 15 years, was going to cost the health care budget of Ontario double. In other words, it would be a bad deal for health care. You would be taking more and more money out of patient care and putting it into the corporate profit line or the corporate financing line, money not going to patients, money going to corporate profits instead.

One of the promises you made was that you were going to eliminate the P3 hospitals. But what we find now is that you haven't eliminated the P3 hospitals. What you did is you took the Conservative lease-purchase, with private financing and lots of private services, and you simply converted it into a mortgage, with lots of private financing and profit being made on the mortgage and on the other privatized services. The only thing that's changed is you took the Conservative lease-purchase and turned it into a Liberal mortgage, but otherwise all of the privatization continues, which means, once again, that when we look at those deals 10 or 15 years from now, we'll discover that they've cost the public twice as much to build those hospitals—money being taken from patient care to feed the corporate profit line.

I don't think this makes any sense. In fact, I think it's a really bad precedent to create, and it's very bad to be taking money that should be going toward patient care and putting it toward the corporate profit line.

I just want people across Ontario to know that I suspect that over the next five months or six months, we are going to see the announcement of several more Liberal P3 hospitals. They'll be complete with the private financing. The private financier will want to make money on the financing deal—they'll want to make profit off that—they'll want to make a profit off the longer term of the mortgage, and they'll want to make a profit on any of the privatized services. I suspect we're going to see more Liberal P3 hospitals. The only difference between a Liberal P3 hospital and a Conservative P3 hospital is Conservatives set up a 20-year or 25-year lease-purchase; Liberals are going to set up a 20-year or 25-year mortgage. But, otherwise, it remains exactly the same—more and more patient care going toward the corporate profit line, which is wrong for health care.

The other interesting aspect of this, of course, is going to be on the operation of long-term care. What we saw under the Conservatives was essentially that the not-for-profit aspects of long-term care got no money. Virtually all of the new funding went to the profit-driven corporations. It's going to be very interesting to see if any of that changes under a Liberal government. I want you to know we'll be watching very carefully.

In the past, what I have found is that the same corporations that used to give a lot of money to the Conservatives when the Conservatives were in power, just roll over and give a lot of money to the Liberals as soon as a Liberal government is elected. But they expect Liberals to provide the same kinds of deals that the Conservatives did. The experience around here in the last 16 years has been that, indeed, Liberals do that. So we're going to be watching this very carefully.

The other aspect of this, of course, is the privatization of home care. One of the things we'll be watching is to see—will you do anything to reverse the Conservative move to turn home care over to private, profit-driven corporations? What we saw under the Conservatives is that the Red Cross has virtually been eliminated everywhere. Red Cross was a community-based, not-for-profit deliverer of home care services. Victorian Order of Nurses, a not-for-profit, community-based deliverer of nursing services and home care—what we saw under the Conservatives is basically all of that was eliminated. Most of it was turned over to profit-driven, private corporations.

Other provinces have done this. Manitoba, under the Conservatives, started down that road. But they were required to, in fact, do an evaluation. The evaluation that was done in Manitoba of private, profit-driven home care—home care provided by private corporations with a profit motive—showed that it was a very inefficient system, it was not very cost-effective, and it also showed that once the private, profit-driven companies got their hands on the system, they immediately set to work lowering the wages of the home care providers and rationing the actual provision of service to patients.

The external evaluator said that the experience of Manitoba was this: The government ended up paying more for home care; more of the public money that went into the home care budget wound up supporting the profit line and the salaries of people who were heading up the corporation; the actual workers who provided home care had their wages cut; and patients who received home care found, increasingly, that services were being rationed. So in terms of what it did for the public, it was a very negative experience; in terms of what it did for home care patients, it was an especially negative experience. You get less home care; the quality of the home care is reduced; you get trained workers and trained nurses leaving the system because they recognize the system is losing its integrity; and more of the money in the home care budget is going to the corporate profit line, yet it's costing the public more money to provide even reduced services.

One of the things we'll be watching is, are the Liberals going to continue down the road that the Conservatives set? Profit-driven, private home care? I suspect you are. In fact, I very strongly suspect that that's where you're headed.

**2140**

The next element of this will be the private MRIs, private CAT scans. I know that you promised before the



election that you were going to get rid of the private MRIs, private CAT scans. I'm struck by the silence over there. I'm struck by the fact that nothing has happened. I would have thought that if you were going to get out of these contracts, you would have done it right away, before it costs you a lot more money. The fact that nothing has happened so far indicates to me that we're not going to see this, or, if we do see it at all, it's going to be very limited in its extent. In other words, we're likely to see more private MRIs, more private CAT scans in Ontario.

The next part of this I want to raise, because it too needs to be debated and thought about, is the whole issue of the environment. Having been around here for a while, I remember that the idea of privatizing water was not a Conservative idea. In fact, the Peterson government of 1987, 1988 and 1989 was seriously looking at privatizing certain aspects of water.

I know that the member for St Catharines would deny any personal involvement in this. That's why, as we understood it, this was all being organized under municipal affairs and it was going to be kept away from the then environment minister.

When we were elected in 1990—there's a certain file in the government that's called "projects underway" or "work underway," and one of the things that was underway under the Peterson Liberals was a strategy to turn many aspects of water delivery over to private corporations. I'm going to be very intrigued and watch as this government revives the ideas of the Peterson government in terms of more privatization of certain aspects of water.

Once again, those of us who've been around know that privatizing water is going to add more cost. It is going to result in all kinds of user fees, copayment fees, administrative fees, and the result for citizens, for taxpayers, will be much, much more expensive delivery of water and, also likely, much less reliability. But it will be interesting to see how this government that said, "Under no circumstances will taxes be raised," deals with that challenge.

I recite again, you should have read the fine print of that Canadian Taxpayers Federation pledge before you signed it, because it talks about water privatization, it talks about transit privatization, it specifically raises the issue of hospital and health care privatization. I just want people across Ontario to know that these are the issues that are actually in play under this government at this time.

Then there's the whole issue of the Oak Ridges moraine. Now, I remember that promise. That promise was repeated ad infinitum. It was repeated before the election, during the election and after the election. Then there was the nervous statement by the new Minister of Municipal Affairs when he said, "I guess we must have been naïve. The Liberal government must have been naïve when it promised to stop development on the Oak Ridges moraine." No, I don't think you were naïve; I think it's a simple case that you had one story before the

election and then you were looking for an excuse to totally change your story after the election.

I simply want people to know that the development industry and the behaviour of developers in Ontario is very similar to some of the health care corporations. When there's a Conservative government in power, they contribute generously to the Conservative Party in exchange for certain development rules.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Order. Just one second. The member for Kenora-Rainy River was struck by the silence before. I think the level has come up a bit, so perhaps we could bring it back down.

**Mr Hampton:** Speaker, I didn't know you were here.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just try me and you'll find out that I am here, yes.

**Mr Hampton:** Speaker, sometimes you tease the bears, and there are a few bears in the audience tonight.

Let's go back to Patti Starr and the development industry. The reality of the relationship between the developers and Conservatives and Liberals is this: When the Conservatives form the government, developers contribute generously to the Conservative Party in hope of getting development laws that work for them. The developers who are left behind and don't get on the gravy train funnel information to opposition Liberals telling them how bad the development deals are. When Liberals get elected, developers historically have contributed a lot of money financially to Liberals, and the developers who somehow don't get on the gravy train then give lots of information to the opposition Conservatives complaining about how bad the development deals are. I suspect that's really what happened on the Oak Ridges moraine. A really determined government could have stepped in and said, "We are stopping this." Yes, it would have cost you some money. That was a consideration. I suspect that the really important consideration is that you wanted to maintain a good relationship with those developers, especially a good financial relationship with those developers, in terms of contributions in the future.

But we will watch what goes on in Pickering and we will watch some of the other development issues. Believe me, if we see any more free fridges, then we'll know that Patti Starr is alive and well and still well connected.

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** Don't go there. We'll talk about your five years and the scandals you had.

**Mr Hampton:** Any time, any time.

The other issue I want to raise here is of course hydro rates, hydroelectricity. I must confess, it is very difficult to pin down the Liberal Party over the last three years as to exactly what their position was with respect to hydroelectricity. Going back to 1991, they were absolutely 100% onside with the Conservatives that privatization and deregulation of hydroelectricity was the thing to do. That position continued throughout 1991 into 1992. In fact, I remember that when the then Premier, Mike Harris, announced in early December 1991 that he intended to privatize both Hydro One, the transmission



system, and Ontario Power Generation, the then Liberal leader, now Premier, said absolutely, that he fully supported privatizing both the transmission system, which is Hydro One, and the generation system, which is Ontario Power Generation.

The interesting thing is that since then we have seen a number of waffles in the Liberal position. The Liberal position, depending on the audience it was being spoken to, has sometimes been in favour of full privatization; at other times it has been in favour of privatization of generation but not transmission; at other times it has been in favour of some privatization of generation but not full privatization. So it's very, very difficult to know where you're at.

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Now the Liberals are the government. I've been trying, through reading the minister's speeches and looking at the legislation that they have so far presented, to figure out where they're at today. What is the Liberal policy with respect to hydroelectricity? Is it public ownership? Is it some public, some private? Is it full private? What it seems to be, when you look at it, is more or less what the Conservative position was when they left office, that is, that you continue to move toward privatization, continue the deregulated wholesale market. But then you have some phony rate caps sort of layered on top of everything to hide from the electricity consumers of Ontario what is actually happening. That's what the Conservatives were doing and it certainly seems, when you look at it, that that is what the Liberal government is doing.

I simply want everyone to know that that strategy wasn't working for the Conservatives and it's not likely to work for the Liberals. It hasn't worked for Ralph Klein in Alberta. Mr Klein professes to be a full-fledged supporter of deregulation and privatization, except he keeps pushing back the date. He keeps pushing off the day of reckoning, when deregulation will be fully implemented and when he forces cities like Edmonton and Calgary and Medicine Hat to sell off their municipal hydro utilities. Of course, we all know about the fiasco in California. California is busy trying to re-regulate and in fact busy trying to re-establish the public element of its hydroelectricity system.

It will be very interesting to watch. What seems to be indicated right now is that the Liberals are more or less going to continue the hydroelectricity policy that we saw from the Conservatives. I simply want people to recognize that when the Conservatives started down this road with Liberal support back in 1998-99, they said that privatization/deregulation would result in lower costs for hydroelectricity; they said it would result in cleaner air; they said it would result in new supply; and they said it would result in a more reliable system. Here we are in 2003, almost five years later, and if people look at their hydro bill and compare it with their hydro bill in 1999-2000, the hydro bill in most cases has almost doubled and in some cases has doubled. There is no new supply; in fact, there's becoming a chronic problem of supply.

There is no cleaner air; in fact, the dirty coal generators are running longer than ever and more intensively than ever, and much of the electricity that we are now importing from the United States is electricity produced from dirty coal. And as to reliability, I think everyone knows the lights went out, and the lights could go out again. That is where the Liberal and Conservative fascination with hydro privatization and deregulation has delivered us in Ontario so far.

I believe the evidence grows stronger everywhere that hydroelectricity is an essential service. We all need it; we need it every day, and the best way, the most cost-effective way, the most efficient way, the most environmentally responsible way to provide that essential service is through a public not-for-profit system. We will see over the next six to nine months, year, year and a half, exactly where the Liberals are going to go, but the initial indication is that they're simply going to follow the Conservative policy and implement a Liberal rate cap, substitute it for a Conservative rate cap.

Then there is the issue of how the Liberals will provide 8,000 new nurses—not only 8,000 new nurses, but replace the nurses who are due to retire in the next couple of years. The reality is, when you look at the demographic studies that have been made, that there are thousands of nurses who are going to retire over the next few years. This will be quite a challenge. When you then factor in the aging of the population and the growth in population and the fact that our seniors are living longer, the equation becomes even more interesting.

Then, when you factor in the footnotes to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation pledge, the pledge which your leader, now Premier, signed, of course the footnotes say that the way to deal with this is to turn over health care to private, profit-driven corporations. This is all going to make for an interesting mix, a very interesting mix.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** I hope you have a good Christmas, Howie, so you aren't so cranky when you get back.

**Mr Hampton:** I think I've touched a nerve with the member from St Catharines. He doesn't like me reciting the footnotes that went along with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation pledge. He doesn't want me to remind you of what you actually signed on to. He doesn't want me to remind you that all the Liberals who were in this House voted for the then Conservative government's Taxpayer Protection Act—the same Taxpayer Protection Act that you're now saying is phony; the same Taxpayer Protection Act that you're now saying doesn't make any sense; the same Taxpayer Protection Act that you're now saying is ridiculous. You all voted for it. Not only did you vote for it once, but you voted for it on second reading, you voted for it on third reading and you went out there and supported it from one end of the province to the other. That's where you're at.

In the time remaining, I just want to talk about what I believe the agenda needs to be. I think I've outlined for everyone the fact that the Liberals are in two places at once. On the one hand they're saying they sign on to the



Canadian Taxpayers Federation's taxpayer protection pledge, with all of the footnotes that say, "Privatize hospitals; privatize health care; privatize hydroelectricity; privatize public transit; cut social investment." On the other side, when they're talking elsewhere in Ontario they say, "Oh, no, we're going to make these social investments." I think people appreciate the conundrum, shall we say, that the Liberal government is in.

Now I want to outline for people what I believe the agenda needs to look like. The health care front—and I'll be quite honest with people; this is a fundamental challenge for people—is going to require some really thoughtful intervention. I read from some of the media clippings that this government hopes that if it forms a warm relationship with the new Prime Minister, somehow money will flow. I just want everyone to understand and to reflect upon the fact that the federal government that cut the most from medicare, the federal government which reduced medicare contributions the greatest, was not in fact the federal government of Brian Mulroney; it was the federal government where the now Prime Minister of Canada was the finance minister. Paul Martin made the greatest reductions to the medicare budget ever in the history of Canada, going back to the creation of medicare. You want people to believe that Paul Martin, who cut substantial amounts of money from medicare, is suddenly going to be your saviour in terms of providing you with new money, more money for medicare? I don't know what you've been smoking over there, but obviously it has completely overpowered your good sense.

2200

Then there's the urban agenda. You're hoping Paul Martin is somehow going to be your saviour on the urban agenda front, that Paul Martin is suddenly going to come up with some money that you can inject into cities like Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, London or virtually any of the large cities. Let me remind you again that if you go back to 1993, 1994 and 1995, when Paul Martin was the federal finance minister, he cut the heart out of federal funding for cities. Whether it was urban transit, whether it was affordable housing or whether it was for basic infrastructure like sewer and water, he cut the heart out of it. I don't know how long you think you can go along pretending that the finance minister who substantially reduced federal contributions and federal investments in cities is suddenly going to be the saviour for cities. I don't know how long you can pretend that, but I suspect that the illusion you're fostering is again going to be a very big disappointment.

Then there's post-secondary education. I'm glad the minister is here. I know she's facing lots of questions from colleges and universities who want to know, now that she has frozen tuition fees, where the money is going to come from to ensure that those colleges and universities continue to be able to offer their programs. I know you're hoping for a lot of money. You're hallucinating about a lot of money coming from Paul Martin. The reality once again is that Paul Martin, when he was the

federal finance minister, cut more money from post-secondary education than even the Mulroney Conservatives. Once again, you seem to be hallucinating about the new Prime Minister suddenly changing his spots and reversing the decisions he made in the period from 1993 through to certainly 1997.

I just have to say to you that I look forward to watching this with some interest, I look forward to watching you with great interest, because at the end of the day I don't think Paul Martin is going to care a whole lot about your political future. He cares about his own political future. If you have to be offered up as a sacrifice, he's quite prepared to do that.

All this enters into how I think the promises or statements that were made in the throne speech are going to, shall we say, crystallize for people. Notice I didn't say anything about promises being fulfilled; I simply said the words that were used would be crystallizing, because I think they are going to crystallize in ways this government doesn't yet anticipate.

I said I wanted to talk about the agenda that I think we need to follow. Much has been made of the Conservatives' view that our taxes have to be reduced to the level of taxes in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania etc. We saw in some cases that the former government even wanted to have taxes that were lower than the taxes in those states. I want to, especially for people at home, reflect upon something. The reality for us and the reality for all Canadian provinces is that since we choose to pay for health care as a public expenditure, since we see health care as a public responsibility and not a private responsibility, that in fact means that we pick up a big responsibility and pay for it in taxes where American states do not. So reducing our taxes to American levels essentially means for people, how much of medicare are we prepared to cut? How much of medicare are we prepared to privatize? How much of our medicare system are we prepared to do away with? That's what the equation is really all about.

I believe that our decision to provide health insurance as a public expenditure, a public responsibility, on a not-for-profit basis is one of the finest things we've done in Canada and it's one of the finest things we've done in Ontario. I also believe it's one of the central defining characteristics of Canada and one of the values that people, not just in Ontario but across Canada, point to and say, "This is special. This is unique. This is what we need to continue to struggle to sustain and improve."

But if someone comes to you and says, "Oh, you can have the same taxes as Michigan, you can have the same taxes as Ohio, you can have the same taxes as Pennsylvania and you can continue to sustain medicare," I suggest you ask them what they've been smoking, because you cannot provide something that is so important, that is so substantial and that is used and utilized across Ontario in a public way and yet reduce taxes to the level that they are in the United States. If we want to have a good medicare system, a good, publicly funded, not-for-profit health care system, then we will need to pay for it through our taxes. Anyone who says to you that you can



then reduce our taxes to the level that they're at in the United States, where they don't pay for health care publicly, where people are on their own, is simply telling you a fairy tale.

The issue really comes down to this: What is this government prepared to do to find the revenues necessary to sustain our health care system? Is it simply going to increase sin taxes? I think the experience is that, yes, sin taxes are a short-term tactic, a short-term strategy. They don't work very well in the longer term for a couple of reasons.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that with the promised increase of tobacco taxes, we're already starting to see a renewed interest and renewed incidence of cigarette and tobacco smuggling. I suspect that over the next year, year and a half we're going to see more and more serious examples of tobacco smuggling, cigarette smuggling, all as an effort to avoid higher tobacco taxes.

I think what that's going to mean for government revenues is that you're not going to get nearly as much money out of increased tobacco taxes as you thought you were going to get. After all, it was the federal Liberal government in 1994 that dramatically reduced tobacco taxes, and the rationale they used for dramatically reducing tobacco taxes was that they had to do this in order to deal with the smuggling problems, that the tobacco taxes that were in place at that time were resulting in far too much smuggling and far too much tax avoidance. So I don't see a lot that's changed in the last nine years, except that I think some of the smuggling operations are probably more sophisticated than ever and probably have access to an increased number of means and mechanisms whereby they can engage in that behaviour.

But what does that mean, then, for the health budget? If you're going to overwhelmingly rely upon tobacco taxes and other so-called sin taxes, what does that mean for the budget? I think it's pretty clear what it means. Much of the revenue this government hopes to have, expects to have from those sin taxes is very unlikely to materialize. What does that then mean for the health budget? I don't think it means anything good. I think it then means that we're going to see more of the P3 hospitals and more moves like privatization of home care, privatization of long-term care and more private health care services. That's where I think this is heading, but we'll see.

The other point I want to make, and I found the Minister of Education's announcement about a week and a half ago very interesting. I believe he announced about \$112 million for literacy and for English as a second language, for helping those students who probably have the greatest challenges in terms of developing literacy and acquiring a higher level of literacy. So he announced some money.

2210

What I was struck by was that the announcement said one thing, but then when you talked to boards of education, particularly boards of education in Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton, some of the large urban boards,

what they said was, "This money is very unlikely to be used for that. We're probably going to use this money to cover this year's deficit." That's in fact what they're doing. They're using the money to cover this year's deficit, because we know that a number of the large boards were in a deficit situation under the Conservatives; they continue to be in a deficit situation with the Liberals. So that announcement was really a one-time announcement to cover off school deficits.

As I say, one-time announcements may get you out of the next six months, claiming surprise over the \$5-billion deficit left by the Conservatives may get you through the next six months, but what's it going to do over the next year? Nothing. What's it going to do in year 2 or year 3? Nothing. Yet if Ontario is going to continue to have a productive economy, going to continue to have a workforce that is able to take part in what is admittedly a dynamic and ever-changing economy, new education funding is absolutely critical.

We read the Rozanski report. I know members of the government read the Rozanski report. The Rozanski report is a very good report. There are real problems with school transportation; there are very, very serious problems with special education, which remains underfunded; there are very serious problems with rural schools, smaller schools, older schools; there is continuing very serious underfunding of English as a second language. Then there's a whole long list of problems that are not as large as the ones that I've just referred to now, but when you add them all up, come to a cumulative in-year cost of \$2 billion a year.

Government has offered no solution to that issue. Government has said over and over again that it's going to find the money for education, but once again, we see no indication of where that's going to come from. I have to remind people again of the taxpayer protection pledge. The Canadian Federation of Taxpayers taxpayer protection pledge that this government signed on to says that you can't raise taxes; it says that you have to move toward more privatization of education, more privatization of health care and more privatization of the essential services that people need. So this is going to be the debate.

Much to the chagrin of some of the government members, I'll make some predictions for them. The quicker you come out and say to people, "Look, if we want to have a better health care system, if we want to provide our children with the education that we need and they need, if we want to do a better job of protecting the environment, if we want to have cities that work, if we want to have urban transit systems that work, if we want to ensure that there's affordable housing, if we want to ensure that people who've had their incomes frozen now for nine years"—I'm talking about people who have to rely upon the Ontario disability support plan because they are disabled and they simply are not employable—"if we want to do those things, if we want to raise social assistance rates so that people are not living in grinding poverty day after day, then some of the tax reductions



that were put in place by the Conservatives will have to be reduced.”

Your position up until now that 90% of the tax cuts put in place by the Conservatives can be sustained and yet there will be money for health care and education and protecting the environment simply won't wash. It is simply untrue. It is simply factually not possible, not workable. The quicker you make that admission and the quicker you accept that what you said in signing the taxpayer protection pledge, that what you said, “We won't raise your taxes”—the quicker you admit that that is false, that it's simply not possible to provide the quality public services, the absolutely essential public services that people need, and yet maintain that Conservative tax regime, the better off we'll all be.

I suspect, though, being Liberals, you won't come out and make that admission, that you'll try to get there by, shall we say, a longer-term, more indirect way; that you'll continue on the road of raising sin taxes, you'll continue the Conservative experiment of raising user fees, copayment fees, administrative fees, student fees other than tuition fees and hope that you can find the money in pieces here and pieces over there. But still that's not going to work. However, I predict that's what you're going to try to do.

**Mr Agostino:** You also predicted 30 seats. Look what happened.

**Mr Hampton:** We'll leave some of those predictions to another time. I'm sure in the next couple of years, we'll get to revisit some of those. Some Liberal members sound an awful lot like the arrogant Conservatives who were here not too long ago. You might want to remember that. What goes around comes around.

The final point I want to make is that many of the problems that I've raised here tonight are not going to wait. They're not going to wait for a two- or a three-year solution. Municipalities in many places across this province are facing the reality that they have water systems that do not work, that are not reliable. They increasingly face the prospect of seeing bad water get into the system. The hydroelectricity system cannot wait for a solution three or four years down the road. The eight-year experiment with privatization and deregulation has already left us in a situation where trying to extend it a little further, trying to experiment with it just a little more is simply not going to put us in the position that we want or need to be in. It's going to expose us to more and more prospects of blackouts; it's going to expose us to more and more dirty air, and it's also going to expose us to hydro costs which are increasingly going to be beyond the capacity of many individuals, many small businesses and probably the capacity of some industries to pay.

In terms of trying to wait for a solution in year 3 or a proposed solution in year 4, just before calling an election, it's probably not on. Many of these issues are urgent; they're pressing. They're pressing for individual people, they're pressing for communities, and they're very pressing for Ontario's economy. We're not going to give you a free ride and sit back and say that there's lots

of time to arrive at these solutions. In fact, there's not a lot of time to arrive at them. For a government that promised the sun and the moon and the stars immediately before the election, I don't think the public is going to be very patient if you're not able to come forward with solutions that on the face of it look like they'll work and as they proceed to be implemented actually do work.

**2220**

The experience of the Peterson government, I think, was very instructive. The Peterson government was elected with the second largest majority ever in the history of Ontario. The Peterson government had 95 out of 130 seats. It was a government that very much took the attitude that, “We've got a large majority, and we've got a lot of time. We can ride out a good economy.” The economy was unbelievable. From 1984 to the spring of 1990, Ontario's economy boomed. Then of course the bottom fell out in the spring of 1990, and we remember that David Peterson thought, “Maybe I can call the election before the people find out that the bottom has fallen out of the economy.” Of course that calculation didn't work. People discovered in the summer of 1990 that the bottom had fallen out of the economy, and they decided that they were going to punish the Peterson government for that. The Peterson government took the approach that with a large majority, they had a lot of time to work through some of these challenges. I would suggest to this government that if you follow the same logic of the Peterson government, you're likely to have the same result. There is a real pent up desire on the part of people to see real change, not just rhetoric but real, effective change and a real effort to deal with and address some of these problems.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Is he still talking?

**Mr Hampton:** I notice the Liberal House leader said, “Is he still talking?” In fact, now that you've given me an opportunity for a second wind, I'm going to raise a few more things that are on my mind.

I want to speak briefly as an MPP who represents a region of the province, northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, there are some very pressing problems indeed. One of the very pressing problems will be the degree to which this province can engage First Nations in a strategy which is a win-win strategy.

We know that the former government was promoting logging north of the 51st parallel; we know that the former government was promoting all kinds of mining activity north of the 51st parallel. But there was a real reluctance on the part of the former government to sit down with First Nations and to develop a nation-to-nation agreement covering land use planning, covering environmental protection, covering how the revenue from resources would be shared, covering things like training and employment development, and also covering things like the recognition and implementation of aboriginal traditional and treaty rights in terms of that northern development. That will be a very real challenge. Again, I can say that there's not going to be a lot of patience there. First Nations have been trying to raise these issues a



number of times. Some members who have been here over the last eight years will know that there were a number of private members' resolutions debated dealing with exactly these issues. That's going to be a very pressing issue.

The second issue from the north which I think is going to hit us very hard is if the government continues down the Conservative road of further privatization and deregulation of the hydroelectricity system. There are many industries in northern Ontario that are very heavy users of electricity: the mining industry, smelting industry, refining industry, steel industry, the pulp and paper industry, the sawmilling industry. I can tell you already that those industries are being hurt very badly, in terms of what industry has to pay, by the kinds of deregulated pricing that you see. For the northern economy, the issue of how hydroelectricity is handled and whether it is returned to a public not-for-profit operating basis or whether it continues to be deregulated and privatized is an absolutely critical issue.

Then there's the whole issue of supply of physicians, nurses and other health care practitioners. As much as that is a challenge in southern Ontario, it is an even bigger challenge across northern Ontario. In fact, it's a huge challenge. So far, any of the ideas I've seen floated by this government, or any of the discussion—and there hasn't been much discussion yet—goes nowhere toward addressing those problems or in any way even recognizing some of those problems.

Then there is the whole issue of how forest operations in this province are going to be regulated. Under the former government, forestry operations were essentially turned over to private corporations, and private corporations were told to police themselves; in other words, self-regulation. I don't think I need to review that both the auditor and the Pembina Institute found in their studies that we're seeing greater and greater infractions across the northern boreal forest. We're seeing over-harvesting, we're seeing wood being harvested and left to waste, we're seeing more and more water crossings where fish spawning and fish populations are being damaged. The whole idea of self-regulation is doing nothing about that. In fact, the whole concept of self-regulation is simply adding to that problem.

What's the new government going to do about that? It seems to me that continuing down the road of self-regulation, which is really deregulation, is simply going to lead to a more and more serious problem there. That is another issue that is not going to wait for a patient answer. It's one that will need to be addressed very quickly—I would say in the next year for sure.

Another aspect of the forest operations issue is simply the fact that across northern Ontario we're hitting a wood supply gap. The wood that is closest to mills—whether those mills are in Kapuskasing, Iroquois Falls, Hearst, Longlac, Hornepayne, Geraldton, or whether they are in Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Kenora, Dryden or Ear Falls—is rapidly being depleted. To access wood fibre to keep those mills running, we will have to move further

and further north. But as I point out, to access wood further and further north, what will be required is an agreement with First Nations. First Nations are not going to simply stand by and watch the forests that are their traditional habitat being harvested without any agreement or any accord with the Ontario government in terms of revenue-sharing, in terms of environmental protection or in terms of land use. That too will have to be settled, and it will have to be settled in short order.

We look forward to watching this government that on one hand said it wanted to invest in health and in education and in protection of the environment—we looked forward to hearing that speech—but we also recognize that this is a government that signed the taxpayer pledge that said, "We won't raise taxes. We'll privatize more services. We'll cut more services." We look forward to seeing which Liberal Party the people of Ontario are going to deal with now. Which Liberal government are people going to see? Is it going to be the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's taxpayer protection pledge with all the privatizations, or are we really going to see the investments in health care and education and environmental protection that people want, and if so, how is the government going to pay for them? The whole concept of a surprise \$5-billion deficit, as I say, isn't a surprise at all. But to the extent that this government wants to use it for a cover, it might work for about six months.

Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I look forward, of course, to the unfolding of all this in the next few months ahead.

2230

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Agostino:** I enjoyed listening to the member from Kenora-Rainy River. It's certainly revisionist history at its best. It's interesting to listen to members of the Bob Rae government talk about promises. Remember those five long, miserable years when the member who just spoke was in cabinet? We remember public auto insurance, the centrepiece of their platform. They were going to bring that in. Oops. I guess the member must have missed that cabinet meeting and forgot all about it. Their hydro policy—what did they do? They sent someone off to buy a rain forest in Costa Rica. That was the extent of the NDP policy during five years in power.

Of course, remember the gem of all gems, the social contract. The party that pretended to represent working women and men across this province, the party of labour, decided unilaterally to rip up collective agreements. You said to those hard-working women and men across Ontario, "We don't care about collective agreements. We don't care about negotiations. We are reopening your contracts and rolling back your wages." You'd expect that from a Tory government. No. We got it from the NDP government. You have the gall to sit there and lecture people on keeping commitments, coming from that party.

The reality is that the NDP didn't get it then and don't get it now. Premier McGuinty and the Liberals get it. We



know we have to make fiscally responsible decisions now in order to ensure we keep our commitments to health care, education and the environment. It's easy to take your attitude. You racked up a \$10-billion deficit in five years. The debt went up by \$45 billion in the five years you were in power. Those were the irresponsible decisions that led to the Mike Harris government getting elected. We're not going to make those mistakes. We're going to govern responsibly. We're going to keep our commitments, but we understand we have to get the fiscal house in order first in order to do that and clean up the mess left by the Tories.

**Mr Dunlop:** I enjoyed listening to the comments tonight from the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Dunlop:** Yes, everyone's here with me.

In all fairness to the member, he brought out something very important that you either agree with or completely disagree with. If you agree with the fact that the world entered a very difficult time in 1990, the very year that David Peterson called the surprise election—Mr Peterson, in his wisdom, had an opportunity second to none in the history of this province to actually pay down a lot of debt, make a lot of efficiencies work in the province of Ontario, and he failed to do so. He actually left the NDP government, under Mr Rae, with a debt entering a very difficult time in our province's history and in our country's history. Let's not forget that.

I don't agree with the NDP policies, but I can tell you that they certainly had some very difficult decisions to make. Maybe they didn't make the right decisions, and there was a \$45-billion or \$50-billion accumulated debt in that period. But I think it's only fair for the members of the House to realize that that was a time in the history of the world when jobs were lost in our country and around the world, and they in fact inherited that from Mr Peterson.

I'd hate to think you're going to be that negative toward Bob Rae's history in our province, because I think he made some clear points on exactly what he was left with—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Ms Churley:** It's a pleasure to respond to the leader of the New Democratic Party, as always. If you listen carefully to the leader of the New Democratic Party, he has knowledge of this province from one end to the other; he's travelled it extensively. He just touched the surface of all the issues and problems that you as a new government are going to have to address, and you should listen carefully to that. There are a lot of problems out there that he outlined tonight, and a lot more had he decided to filibuster, which he didn't do. He could have outlined all night the kinds of problems and issues, many of course created by the previous government.

The people of this province had the stuffing knocked out of them over the past eight years, and they're counting on the Liberals, you guys, to invest back in their communities.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Churley:** You can tell the Liberals are getting defensive—when they're on the defensive—when they start bringing up things like the rain forest and the social contract.

I was here, and I remember the Liberals sitting over there then, and do you know what they said then about the social contract? That it didn't go far enough, given the deficit, given the terrible—

**Mr Hampton:** Lyn McLeod said the social contract didn't go far enough.

**Ms Churley:** That's right. She said we didn't go far enough.

But I'll tell you what we invested that money in—I'll tell you just a few things right now. We continued to build affordable housing, even though there was a big deficit and a recession. We continued to invest in health care and home care and education. We created the Ontario Clean Water Agency and started to bring in conservation and energy efficiency programs. We used that money wisely to invest in the people of Ontario, and didn't borrow money as the Tories did to give tax breaks to rich people and big corporations. We're warning you tonight that you have to take some of that tax money back to reinvest in these communities and these programs.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** The member from Kenora-Rainy River offers us some predictions, and I'll offer a few of my own, I guess.

The first thing I'm going to predict is that the Tories will continue to say that the \$5.6 billion doesn't exist. I'm going to predict that the member from Kenora-Rainy River will continue to talk about public power and say it's the only way to do it. I'm going to predict that the members of the NDP will continue to say the Liberals are wrong and that the Tories were wrong and I'm going to continue to say—well, you get the idea. The idea is that the NDP will continue to stand up and rail against the government no matter who it is, no matter what idea it is.

I'm going to suggest to you that the members on the other side, the official opposition, will continue to tell us we're breaking promises, but they'll forget to mention all the ones we're keeping. I'm going to predict that the people of Ontario are sick and tired of hearing the banter back and forth about not getting things done.

I'm going to predict something else that's important for us to remember. I'm going to predict that Dalton McGuinty is going to continue to keep this province moving forward.

I'm also going to make another prediction; that is, once we get this fiscal house in order, we're going to see a social change that never has been seen in this province before. We're going to do it right. We're going to consult with the people of Ontario and we're going to take care of our social programs as has been promised by Dalton McGuinty.

I'm going to make another prediction, and that prediction is simple: The people of Ontario already have



started to understand that we've got a major problem we've got to solve first, because you've got to get your fiscal house in order before you can do some of the things we've made the promise to do.

I'm going to make a final prediction: At the end of four years, when we've maintained all those promises, the people of Ontario are going to say to us again, "Do you know what? You did what you said you were going to do, and we're going to put you back in office again because we like what you've done."

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member from Kenora-Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Hampton:** I thank the members for their participation, and I just want to respond to a couple of them.

Some mention was made of rain forests, and I do remember that a Liberal, Maurice Strong, came forward with an idea to buy a Costa Rican rain forest. In fact, the cabinet I was part of shut that idea down. But it was another one of those ideas that Liberals float every once in a while. Maurice Strong—I gather he's now going to be an adviser to Paul Martin—floated that idea, and of course we had to set him straight and let him know that if he wanted to make an investment in Costa Rican rain forests, he should make it himself.

Then I just note that it is surprising: I dealt in most of my speech with the kinds of challenges Ontario faces today and the kinds of choices this government will have to make, particularly given that one day you signed the Canadian Taxpayers Federation pledge that you wouldn't raise taxes and you'd privatize a whole bunch of things, and the next day you're promising you'll invest in health care and education and protecting the environment.

Liberals somehow are fixated on the past, and so you want to raise the issue of the social contract. I want to remind you that your then-leader, Lyn McLeod, said the social contract didn't go far enough, that it didn't cut enough, that it didn't take enough away. That was the Liberal position at the time, so don't try to revise it now.

I simply want to say that the issue of auto insurance, for example, still hounds us today. What we find, looking at other jurisdictions, is that the solution of public auto insurance is gaining greater credibility everywhere and private operation of auto insurance continues to increase in terms of problems.

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**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** As the new member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, I'm very pleased to rise today and have the opportunity to reflect on the speech from the throne and the goals our government has set for itself over the next many months and years.

Before I do so, I want to say what a great privilege it is for me to be part of the Legislative Assembly, to represent the people of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, as well as to serve as parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

I am so very fortunate to have the love and support of my husband, Paul, our families, my parents, my sisters, who are here this evening on what has been somewhat of

a long evening, their spouses and children, who were with me each and every day on a campaign that essentially began in 1998 and who have supported me without reservation over the years.

I also want to express my appreciation to a huge group of old and new friends who worked tirelessly through this campaign and the last, a group so large and determined that one might describe it as an army. In fact, much has been made of the army of volunteers who supported my campaign, an army of volunteers that put up almost 3,000 signs, made a record number of telephone calls, visited each and every door in the riding twice, some three times; who made sure the that volunteers and I were fed and watered, the data entered, the office running smoothly, the events a success, and the list just goes on.

I want to take the opportunity to thank each and every one of you once again from the floor of the Legislature. You were amazing. You came from every walk of life. You were mothers, fathers, lawyers, teachers, journalists, engineers, artists, small business owners, students and more. You filled our office each and every day. We worked hard and we had fun. We accomplished our common goal to change the government. I am standing here because of you, your hard work, your dedication and your support, and I will not let you down.

Our government has before us an incredible challenge and an awesome opportunity to leave our world a better place than we have found it and a challenge to do so in the face of a financial burden we have inherited.

I know that you may not care about numbers on a spreadsheet. Your concerns for the future are about whether your kids' education will improve, whether the schools will be at peace, whether your hospital will be there when you need it, whether public transit will be better or worse, whether the air will be clean, whether our water will be safe to drink. But we must get the province's fiscal house in order because it is the foundation on which all of our common goals are based.

To the residents of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, whom I have the honour and privilege of representing: Thank you for your confidence and overwhelming support during the last provincial election. I want you to know that I am as determined today to tackle the challenges ahead and to create and embrace the opportunity for desperately needed change as I was when we spoke on each of your doorsteps during the recent campaign.

I share your concerns about health care, education and our economic potential. I have lived and worked in the riding for many years as a volunteer and advocate for a vibrant and healthy community. I know many of you through our work to clean up the environment and to build strong community organizations. I am proud of our community's efforts to date, but we must do more, and we will.

I know that on October 2 you chose to take the high road. You chose to restore confidence and quality in our schools and in our children's education. So did I.



You chose to guarantee the protection of universal health care and to improve home care and services for seniors. So did I.

You chose to live within our means and spend responsibly so as not to mortgage our children's futures. So did I.

You chose to clean up our air, protect our drinking water and to reform government. So did I.

A strong economy, good schools, quality health care, safe and clean communities: That's what you and I chose on October 2, and that's what our government will deliver.

The size of our mandate and the strong support you have given me in Etobicoke-Lakeshore underscores your desire for change and renewal in our province. However, if we do not get the deficit under control, we will not be able to accomplish the important things we were elected to undertake.

I want you to know that I have an idealistic vision of the province and of Etobicoke-Lakeshore and want to make Ontario the envy of the world, but I am not naive about the challenges that lie ahead. There will be setbacks and sacrifices along the way, but I can guarantee you that we will work just as hard as each and every one of you do in your daily lives. Together we will make a difference.

We cannot do everything right now, but we can do something, some very important things, and that is what we are doing and will continue to do.

We have given you the straight goods on the \$5.6-billion deficit. We are taking concrete steps to tackle the financial mess our province now faces in order to put our fiscal house in order and live within our means.

We have brought forward our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act and have supported the National Health Council, to improve accountability in the health care system and provide better service to the public.

We have moved to fulfill our key commitment to implement the recommendations of the Walkerton report to protect the water we drink.

We have created a Ministry of Children's Services and a secretariat for democratic renewal to improve services for children and strengthen our democracy.

We have removed the supervisors from the Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto school boards to give parents and kids a voice and restore local democracy. And we have provided the badly needed funds to better help our inner-city schools meet the challenges they face as a result of the diversity of their student population.

These are just a few of our accomplishments, and this is just the beginning. We are on the precipice of great decisions that will bring about great change, change that will be accomplished in responsible and carefully planned steps.

Some may say we are moving too slowly. Others may say we are charging ahead too quickly. We will be guided not by speed, but by what is reasonable, responsible and right.

As I move forward, tackling the challenges that are ahead, some now known to us, some of which we are yet

unaware, I want you to know what ideals and influences will guide my thoughts and my actions.

It is often said that we learn everything we need to know about life in kindergarten, and there is a certainly a lot of truth in that statement. We learned to pick up our toys and not to litter. We learned to express ourselves. We learned to share. We learned to dream about our future with a family, a home and future jobs as doctors, lawyers, teachers and even dragon slayers in make-believe lands. We would do well by remembering some of these lessons as we tackle the issues facing our province in the months and years ahead.

There are a number of influential people in my life who have made me the person I am today, and I want to acknowledge the lessons I have learned from each of them.

My grandmother, Lauria Roy, an American-born francophone, came to Canada as a young child in 1911 with her family, seeking a better life. She later raised 10 children in a small town in southern Saskatchewan, getting by on her faith, sheer will, determination and sometimes her stubbornness. She taught me the value of hard work and instilled in us the need to take good care of what you have been blessed with. My grandmother is 98 years old and going strong, a testament to her good genes and her stubbornness perhaps.

My paternal grandparents, Hans and Mary Broten, reflect the diversity that is truly Canadian. He, an immigrant from Norway, and she, with roots from England, met, married, worked hard, raised a son and instilled in all of us a love for life, laughter and adventure. My grandmother Mary still lives in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, where she is desperately trying to convince Saskatchewan cable to carry the Ontario parliamentary channel.

My parents gave my sisters and me a truly Canadian experience, as we grew up living in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Quebec and Ontario, and instilled in us a belief that we could do whatever we wanted to do, be whatever we wanted to be—everything and anything was possible. They also instilled in us a strong understanding of the value of public service as, despite their busy lives, they were both active volunteers and participants in whatever community we were living in at the time.

If my parents taught me that I could be anything I wanted to be, my husband, Paul, through his support, encouragement and patience, has enabled me to make the vision a reality. Paul is my best friend, my confidante, my biggest fan and, at times, my harshest critic. We perhaps should have known that one of us would end up on the floor of the Legislature, as Paul and I met some 16 years ago when we ran against each other in a student government election at McMaster University. Who won, you ask? We both did.

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Another significant influence in my life is Madam Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé, who recently retired from the Supreme Court of Canada. I had the awesome privilege of serving as a law clerk to Madam Justice L'Heureux-Dubé at the court in 1993. She was one of



this country's foremost advocates promoting human rights through substantive and contextual equality. Throughout her career she was steadfast in the protection of women, children, aboriginal people, people of colour and all disadvantaged groups in society. She provided a strong voice to those who were silenced by our laws, our entrenched systems, and she instilled in me an ideal of fairness that will always endure. She taught me by example to do what is right; not what has been done before, not what is popular and not what is easy.

Finalement, je ne pourrais pas compléter la liste de ceux qui m'ont influencée sans donner de la reconnaissance à mon oncle Albert Roy, qui a représenté le comté d'Ottawa-Est dans la législature de 1971 jusqu'à 1984. Albert était très fier d'être bilingue et a toujours été reconnu pour les efforts qu'il a faits pour protéger les droits de la minorité francophone en Ontario. Et j'espère que son amour pour la compétition et sa joie de vivre mequera de la même façon que lui.

So what lessons do I take with me? Work hard. Take care of what we have been blessed with. Enjoy the adventure of life. Take time to laugh. Think of the possible, not the impossible. Do what is right; not what has been done before, not what is popular and not what is easy. Sois toujours fière de ton héritage. It is these values that will guide me as our government works to strengthen our battered public education system, protect with dogged determination our public health care system, renew our democracy, ensure a future with clean air and clean water and rebuild an economic foundation which is secured by the full potential of all Ontarians.

A better and brighter future is within our grasp, but it won't be obtained without hurdles. We do not have all the answers, but we do have these, and other old values that won't wear out, to be our guide: Look after your neighbour. Together we are stronger than alone. Leave the world a better place than you found it.

Our government will work to restore confidence and quality in our schools and in our children's education. Education is the ladder of opportunity for all of our children and helps them climb as high as they can and become the very best they can be. To all the parents I met during the campaign, you should know that we have a plan to make public education the best education available in the world, a plan that puts the needs of our students first.

We know that we need support students' success and raise student achievement, and we will. We know that we need to bring peace to our schools and make them safe, and we will. We know that we need to help the children who need it the most, those with special needs, and we will.

We will seek out creative, innovative and practical solutions to ensure the long-term viability of public health care in Ontario, a system that was once the envy of the world. I am proud that we will enshrine in law the protection of universal medicare.

To the many seniors who asked, "How will you make life in Ontario better for me?": I am proud of our com-

mitment to establish better nursing home standards because, in addition to being a member of this Legislature, I am a granddaughter, and want to ensure that each and every senior citizen in Ontario is treated with the compassion, care, dignity and respect they deserve.

As my grandmother taught me, "Take care of what you have." Our vision for the environment is a future with clean air and clean water. We are committed to reversing Ontario's downward slide in the areas of preserving and safeguarding our environment. We are committed to doing everything we can in order to ensure that the Walkerton tragedy does not reoccur and that no one in Ontario ever again dies simply by drinking the water out of the tap in their own home.

We are committed to replacing Ontario's biggest polluters, our coal-fired power plants, with cleaner technologies by 2007.

We are committed to making our cities strong again, by tackling gridlock with new support for our public transit systems, ensuring affordable housing and managing growth.

The strength of our province depends on the strength of our communities. The community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore is strengthened by wonderful organizations like LAMP and Stonegate CHC, GASP, the Gatehouse, Women's Habitat, Lakeshore Arts, Daily Bread Food Bank, Out of the Cold, Storefront Humber, Etobicoke Services for Seniors, Lakeshore Community Partnership, the Etobicoke Rotary, ratepayers associations and the BIAs, and the list goes on and on. All of these groups work toward the betterment of the quality of life in our community, and I want to thank them for the work that they do each and every day.

Our vision on fiscal responsibility: to spend tax dollars wisely, to provide value for those dollars and to invest in the future. We need to live within our means, not as an end, but as a means to an end in order to protect our now damaged, vital public services so that they can once again become the envy of the world.

We are committed to encouraging the success and prosperity of all Ontarians by providing the foundations of public systems that work for everyone. We will win the race to the top, not to the bottom.

We know that the diverse cultures that make up Ontario enrich our communities and strengthen our economy. We are committed to accelerating the integration of immigrants into our province. When foreign-trained doctors, engineers and PhDs are flipping burgers and driving taxis, that is a betrayal of the pact that was made with them when they uprooted their families and signed on to come to our province. It is a terrible waste of their valuable skills that we so desperately need. We must put an end to exclusionary practices and invite every new Canadian to take a seat at the table of opportunity, and we will make that happen.

For all of the individuals who have not participated in our democratic process, I am proud of our commitment to renew democracy and to make government more relevant to the people that we serve. We need a full, open



and public debate to examine voting reform and renew confidence in our democratic process. We will undertake such a debate. We need to ensure that our young and future leaders participate in the democratic process, and we will examine new ways to make your voices heard, so that you feel connected to the decision-making process.

The political pundits who comment on these things say that the reason voter turnout is low and people are disengaged from the political process is that power is concentrated in the hands of too few. That may be part of the reason, but my own view is that people are disengaged because governments and politicians fail to inspire. The job of a government is not simply to make sure that the debits equal the credits; it is to ensure that all Ontarians believe that not only is a better future possible, but that it is probable.

We can all think back to great moments in history where the government not only responded to the people's agenda, but led the charge. Whether it was the creation of universal medicare, the protection of human rights or the building of quality public education, Ontarians believe in these values. They are the very values that have defined us as a province and which should guide us today.

Why I ran and why I feel privileged to serve the people of Etobicoke-Lakeshore in this government is because I believe it is once again time for government to inspire the people. It is our privilege to serve, our responsibility to lead and our obligation to dream about what is possible. I am proud to be part of a government that is prepared to be honest, committed to solve the problems, but most importantly, determined to dream about what is possible, even probable.

When I come to work in this wonderful building full of legend and history, I think about the people who sent me here, the voters of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who shared with me their troubles, their hopes, their dreams and their concerns as I walked the many streets in the communities which make up my great riding: Long Branch, Mimico, New Toronto, Kingsway, Sunnylea, Alderwood, to name a few. I listened and I learned, and I am committed to accomplishing what you have sent me here to do.

The throne speech marks both an end and a beginning. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity for sharing my thoughts with the House today. I sincerely hope that this throne speech does indeed mark the beginning of a new era of government: an end to conquer-and-divide politics and a singular mantra that tax cuts will fix all that ails this province; and a new beginning, where we will begin to work together instead of against, begin to create coalitions instead of scapegoats, begin to build instead of dismantle and begin to make government more responsive and more accountable.

It is my hope that those who have the privilege to sit here together will do so in the spirit of co-operation. I truly believe that despite our ideological differences, if we draw on the feelings that we felt the moment we were first elected—pride, humility, awe, excitement, and the belief that everything and anything was possible and the

opportunity to make that happen—we can and will find a better way to serve the people of this great province.

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I look forward to working with the members of this House, the citizens of Ontario and, in particular, the residents of Etobicoke-Lakeshore to seek solutions to the problems that our province must now tackle. I encourage you to bring forward your ideas and work along with our government to ensure that Ontario is once again the best place in the world in which to live, work, learn and raise a family. Take a moment. Dream about what is possible. Now let's get to work and make that dream a reality for all Ontarians.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Yakabuski:** I'd like to congratulate and commend the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for her maiden speech tonight. I certainly found some of the background and family history very interesting and am looking forward to learning more at other times in this House.

The member has a very optimistic view of what's going to go on in this House. I appreciate that, and it's good to see that kind of optimism. But with the throne speech that has been tabled in this House, I'm sorry, I cannot share that optimism. They've talked about their plan for energy in the province of Ontario. The member talked about their commitment to the environment and the decision to shut down coal-fired power plants in this province by 2007.

*Applause.*

**Mr Yakabuski:** My colleagues opposite are applauding, but they know they're dreaming in Technicolor. It is not going to happen. I want you to stand up and say it is an absolute, because it'll be just another in the long line of broken Liberal promises.

We talk about the hydro rate cap. This is going to have a significantly detrimental effect on homeowners and businesses in rural Ontario, ridings like mine, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. When this rate increase is implemented, it's going to hurt farmers, it's going to hurt businesses, it's going to hurt seniors living in their own homes, and they don't live in 600-square-foot homes in rural Ontario. They don't live in apartment buildings—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Ms Churley:** I'll pick up where he left off.

It is my pleasure to respond once again to yet another maiden speech this evening. Let me say again for the record that as a feminist, I just want to do away with that description of these first speeches: maiden speeches. We'll deal with that another time.

I do want to thank the member. I'm getting tired. I find it very hard to be particularly partisan when we have such incredible members from all parties standing up tonight giving us their maiden speeches, telling us who they are and telling us about their ridings. It's very hard to stand up tonight and be partisan about that.

All I can say is that there's something a little weird about this, because normally these maiden speeches are given right after the throne speech is delivered, within



days after it's delivered. We kind of get that out of the way. Of course, the Liberal House leader made a mistake. Under the rules, he wasn't able to introduce it and we weren't able, until now, to have that debate.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** Of course it was our fault. We were just following the rules. So to people out there who are wondering, after all these broken promises and all these things that have happened over the last few weeks, why we're here tonight having these speeches—which I would say are very important for all new members to have the opportunity to talk about their riding, how they got elected, and what their dreams and aspirations are.

Now, I don't know if you know, but I was born in Old Perlican, Newfoundland, grew up in Happy Valley, Labrador, and moved to Toronto many years ago. Here I am now, in the Legislature, and very happy, like the new members here tonight, to be in this fine place.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr Speaker.

**Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce):** It's certainly my pleasure this evening to also add my congratulations to the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I would like to say that I find it extremely refreshing to hear such optimism. I look at it a bit differently. I believe that this is what the people voted for. Obviously, they saw what they liked and they marked their X accordingly. People want new hope. They want change. That's why they voted the way they did on Oct. 2.

I also would like to say to all of our families over here that so much of your time goes into all of the projects that we all begin, and obviously your support means a great deal. I know these campaigns remain successful with our families' and our volunteers' support.

I also would like to say, what an inspiration to the people of Ontario your speech was tonight. You can walk away tonight—hopefully maybe a little before 12; around 12—with the confidence that you have inspired your fellow parliamentarians. I believe that your accomplishments will hold you in good stead for the rest of your career, which I'm sure will be many, many years to come. With the new Liberal government, a new change, a new attitude, a new future, the people of Ontario once again have hope and optimism.

I also would like to say, being from the most rural riding in the province of Ontario, that the rural people of the province share the same hope and optimism.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'd like to congratulate the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore on her speech this evening. Actually, we've heard three of our new female members give some really nice speeches tonight—Ms Scott, Ms Wynne and also Ms Broten here—as they give their first speech, one of their main speeches in the House.

I wanted to just say something. It sounds like a love-in here tonight—how wonderful things are with the throne speech—especially coming from the Liberal members. However, I have to tell you that the throne speech caused me a great deal of concern as a rural MPP in the province of Ontario. First of all, what was disappointing to begin

with was the fact that Mr McGuinty, when he selected his cabinet—21 of the 23 members are from the cities in our province. Of course, the cities represent a very small geographic area compared to what we actually have in size, so we are really concerned in rural Ontario about the lack of interest, particularly the lack of interest in the throne speech.

Another thing I heard the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore talk about was the new thoughts or the new ideas behind universal medicare. That comes from the introduction of Bill 8. I've talked to representatives from the Ontario Hospital Association and the Ontario Medical Association in the last week, and I'm going to tell you, you've got big, big, big problems with Bill 8. If you think that's going to go smoothly in committee hearings etc, you're in for some major disappointments, I believe.

The thoughts are great. What's happening here sounds wonderful. I thank her for her comments in her speech tonight, but I caution her on rural Ontario and on universal medicare—big problems coming up.

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**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has two minutes to summarize.

**Ms Broten:** I want to thank my friends around the room for their comments. On October 2, the people in Etobicoke-Lakeshore voted for change. They voted for a government that would be optimistic, that would believe that we can have a better future and that would work toward ensuring a future with clean air, clean water, a strong public education system and quality universal health care.

This is not about talk and not about promises. It is about laying the groundwork for the future of our province. That's what we talked about in the 30 days when we went about in our communities and asked people, "What kind of future do you want to live in? What kind of future do you hope to have for our province?" What we heard back was that they wanted a government that would roll up its sleeves and solve the problems, that would come forward and inspire them and lead them so that we could once again dream about a better future. What parent doesn't hope their child will have a better future than they? I look at my own grandparents. Why did they come to this country? Because they hoped to have a better future in this country, one where they would have clean air to breathe, good water to drink, an education system that would prosper future generations, and quality health care there when they would need it.

Those are the things Ontarians told us on October 2, those are the things we fought for, those are the things the people in Etobicoke-Lakeshore voted for, and those are the very commitments that this government will deliver in the months and years to come.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to rise to join in the debate. We're finally debating the throne speech. The motion to debate the motion to debate the throne speech I think was finally passed. The motion to



debate the throne speech was passed, and now we debate the throne speech.

**Ms Churley:** Whose fault was that?

**Mr Hudak:** I don't know whose fault it was. I know I had to suffer through it. And here I am at 11 o'clock, with Monday Night Football going on, right in the middle of my CBS SportsLine fantasy pool. The game is on-line, and hopefully the Philadelphia defence is coming along strong.

I want to welcome our guests in the gallery as well, who must be enduring some awful penance to be here with us this evening. Then as soon as Hudak is up to speak, they head for the hills. They're out of here.

**Mr Yakabuski:** There's a limit to everyone's patience.

**Mr Hudak:** Yes, there's a limit to how much humans can endure. They're our own gallery too. Sometimes the support there is too rare, and we chase them out.

Nonetheless, I'm pleased to add some comments to the throne speech this evening from the point of view of Erie-Lincoln.

I think we would all agree that as far as throne speeches go, it's probably not the most ambitious document that has been before the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It wasn't really earth-shattering. It had some very lofty, prosaic language to it. In fact, I think they might have borrowed some of the script writers from *The West Wing* and stolen a few lines from Martin Sheen to throw into the introduction. But once you got past the dressing, past the packaging, there wasn't that much to it in terms of grand ideas or even a theme that brought things together, aside from just a package of campaign promises tempered with a tone to hold off on what you can expect, to the interest groups out there, who may have been lured along with campaign promises and have been told now to hold off for awhile.

But as far the grand vision of what the Dalton McGuinty government is all about, what they stand for is hard to find as you parse through the words of the throne speech as we kick off this particular session. It's still early days, so if I look back at this speech a couple of years hence, it may prove that I was wrong in my remarks, but in these early days we can see that it'll be very much—

**Mr Levac:** Withdraw now.

**Mr Hudak:** I'm not going to pre-emptively withdraw my comments. I'm putting an asterisk around them for Hansard. I could be wrong. I hope I'm wrong, because I like those governments with a grand vision that are going to make big changes and launch us to an even better future. I appreciate the optimism of some of the members across the floor, but I just don't see it. It's like that old Wendy's commercial: "Where's the beef?" between the two buns. I don't see it. I think this will be very much "Where's the beef?"

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** Where are the beef inspectors? That's a better question.

**Mr Hudak:** I'm going to get into the broken promises later on. I appreciate your jumping in to the middle of my

speech. That's a good point about beef inspectors, I say to the member. This is another example—and this is in the B section of my speech—of a broken promise by the Dalton McGuinty government.

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** Is this the B section?

**Mr Hudak:** That's part of the B section. No, no, this is just the introduction, merely the introduction. I appreciate your impatience to get to the point, but I am going to talk about broken promises. They have plenty of time, I say to the honourable member across the floor. But he gives a bit of a preview about the meat inspectors, because I remember the campaign pledge from now Premier, then candidate, McGuinty that they were going to have a public inquiry into the meat inspection system, but once they got into government—while they said one thing during the campaign, they said something entirely different once in office and have watered down that campaign commitment quite considerably. But I'll get to that.

Let's talk a little bit about what I see as likely a very managerial style of government, not one of bold visions but one of doing one issue at a time, trying to control the agenda. Granted, we had an election in the fall, but this session is a relatively short session. So I think we'll see, what, three bills passed in this session. I think it's symbolic what those bills are, symbolic of one of the biggest tax hikes in the history of Ontario, shattering the record of the previous tax hike kings, Bob Rae and David Peterson. That's one of the first bills in the Legislature that they're pushing through this session: the biggest tax hike. I say the biggest tax hike, in a single day, in the history of the province of Ontario.

The other important bill that I think they want to bring through is the "We're not going to give you the 20% reduction on your car insurance like we promised" bill. I'm not sure if that's exactly the title, I say to my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin. You know the bill I'm talking about, where you said you would cut rates by 20% within 90 days of taking office. My colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke calls it the flim-flam rate freeze. Now, I don't know if that's exactly the name of the bill, but I think you know the one we're talking about. They want to get that through this session, the auto insurance bill where you had promised during the campaign a 20% auto rate reduction and are not producing it.

So we have the big tax hike bill, we have the no-cuts-in-auto-insurance bill, and the third one that I think you want to get through is the increase in hydro rates. Despite the campaign pledge to freeze hydro rates—I remember that the member from Parkdale-High Park had committed, like his fellows, that they would freeze hydro rates in the province of Ontario. What a triumvirate. Three big bills and three big campaign breaks: higher hydro rates, higher taxes and higher auto insurance rates.

So we're seeing about three bills being passed in this particular session. There may be intentions to call the assembly back in January or February if there's an ambitious agenda to get through the assembly, but I don't



suspect so. I don't think they're going to be calling the assembly back in January or February. Maybe they'll bring it back in March. I could be wrong. If it is, we'll be here to hold the government accountable.

I guess the point I'm making is that this is not a government that is full of ambition to make major change in the province of Ontario. It's one to do one item at a time in a very managerial sense, very much in the Chrétien style of government to try to keep issues down, and if it ain't broke, don't fix it, and if it's broke, maybe it'll fix itself, and ultimately, if you need to take action, then to take action.

Definitely as part of its strategy, which I think reflects the Chrétien approach, a managerial style of government that, is a very direct attempt to try to sideline the opposition parties, to weaken them as much as possible and then—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hudak:** I could be wrong. As I said, I want to be an optimist; I want to think better of the government side. You might be right, member from Dundas-Flamborough-Shottenburgh—

**Mr Brownell:** Aldershot.

**Mr Hudak:** Aldershot, who may be my neighbour one day; I should be very careful about teasing him about the name of his riding.

Now, you made me lose my train of thought. Oh, yes: Sidelineing the opposition parties is definitely an overt strategy of the government—maybe not the members. Maybe the members don't want to play that way. They're convinced that, upon their platform and performance of government, they will be re-elected on their own. Maybe they're convinced of that, but I suspect that the backroom folks are saying, "You know what?" They're not so sure. "Let's try to reduce the strength of the opposition, sideline the opposition parties, hamstring them as best as possible," and then ultimately, come 2007—I don't know if they've set a fixed election date. Is that another broken promise? There's no fixed election date yet, I don't think.

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**Mr Dunlop:** They're going to put that off a couple of terms.

**Mr Hudak:** We will see.

I suspect their goal is to win a war of attrition and to sideline the two opposition parties. Maybe they will continue to try this for some time, but that dog don't hunt, or he's going to quit hunting pretty soon. Every time they do a press release, every time they do a speech in the Legislature, it's "Tories bad. Tories bad." Granted, maybe governments, when they come into power, like to put down, to chagrin, the previous government. But I would say, having been there in 1995, when we came into office encountering a deficit of epic proportions—about \$11.4 billion—I don't think you saw the same sort of partisan approach in terms of running down the previous government.

*Interjection:* No, never.

**Mr Hudak:** I would challenge you to go back and look at that. If you look at the press releases that you

folks do, for example, the press releases you put on the government Web site continue to talk about the Tory this and the Tory that. Even the language is part of it. In fact, do you know what I think is really happening? You're still campaigning. We're the opposition party. You're still campaigning. I think you guys have developed a strategy of a perpetual campaign: "Liberal good, Tory bad." It's not about being in government; it's not about making decisions to make the province of Ontario a better place. It's really a continuation of the campaign. I suspect, in some backroom office somewhere, the campaign is in full force to try to pull down the opposition parties. It's obvious what they've tried to do to mute my good friends in the NDP. They've tried to mute the historically strong voice of the NDP by limiting how much time they have in question period and in debate. I believe the NDP deserves more time in the Legislature for question period. And you know what? I think Dalton McGuinty is going to cave on this; I do. He drew the line in the sand, and he said, "No, we're not going to give the NDP anything." He's going to retreat. I think Dalton McGuinty is going to retreat.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hudak:** I don't think I'm going to get through all of my remarks, Mr Speaker. But as part of my introduction on this, I think Dalton McGuinty is going to retreat, because there seems to be a pattern of drawing a line in the sand, trying to hold fast, and at the first sight of trouble, Dalton McGuinty retreats.

A couple of examples: Oak Ridges moraine. He brusquely went out there and said, "You know what? I'm not going to allow a house to be built on that Oak Ridges moraine, not one single home, not a shack, not even one of those little Fisher Price villages to be built on the Oak Ridges moraine—nothing." He said that during the campaign. Even after becoming Premier, presumably having been briefed on the issues—you would assume he would have followed the issues, which were quite clear—he kept saying, "Not a single house on the Oak Ridges moraine." And then what happened? Dalton McGuinty drew a line in the sand and Dalton McGuinty retreated. At the first sign of pressure, he retreated.

Second, with respect to the so-called P3 hospitals, it's pretty much the same deal—and I think Marilyn Churley would agree with me—for the P3 hospitals that the previous Conservative government had. Maybe you put a red ribbon on it. You took off the blue ribbon and you put a red ribbon on it. Maybe you changed the order of the Ps: maybe it's not 3P, it's P3. It's the same deal. Again, Dalton McGuinty drew a line in the sand: "No private health care in the province of Ontario. No, these public-private partnerships are going to be gone." And then the pressure came forward. People started looking at the issue, and once again Dalton McGuinty drew a line in the sand and Dalton McGuinty retreated. So the P3 hospitals go ahead.

I suspect, with respect to the NDP, where Dalton McGuinty once again has drawn a line in the sand and has had some stiff resistance from our friends in the NDP



for more time in question period, more time in the Legislature—I expect that once more Dalton McGuinty will retreat and the NDP will win more time in question period and more time in debate.

That’s what I have seen, a bit of a managerial style, treating one issue at a time. I felt the throne speech, as a result, was relatively bland in terms of vision.

There are a few major omissions that I don’t think I can go without passing comment upon. There were 1,000 police officers—nowhere to be seen in this document. I thought I remembered that as a campaign commitment. I thought I heard then candidate Dalton McGuinty say, “We’re going to bring 1,000 police officers and put them on the streets,” just like the previous Conservative government had committed to and had done, and 1,000 police officers, it’s feared—in fact, I think my colleague the member for Simcoe North, who’s our critic for what used to be the Solicitor General’s ministry and now community safety, has pointed out, rightly so, that the words “police officer” and “firefighter” didn’t even appear in the entire throne speech, totally abandoned and cast by the side. So the 1,000 police officers commitment—gone.

Secondly, they had a commitment to close the coal-fired plants by 2007. That was the campaign commitment. This is sort of the off-again, on-again coal-fired commitment. But what we saw in the throne speech, I thought, was instructive, where the 2007 disappeared with the police officers. So the thousand police officers and the 2007 had disappeared into the ether, a bit like a Twilight Zone episode. You’d think Rod Serling could read this throne speech, with the way the campaign commitments have disappeared.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** We saw a government disappear.

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate the member’s comments. We’ve seen a lot of campaign commitments disappear and we’ve seen a lot of courage to make tough decisions disappear. The member talks about things disappearing. We talk about the coal-fired plants disappearing by 2007, the 1,000 police officers disappearing, and the hard cap on class sizes morphed into a vague commitment to smaller class sizes. Granted, a good goal, an admirable goal to reduce class sizes, but Dalton McGuinty was clear: He’d have a hard cap of 20 students in the early years on every classroom in the province. We’ve seen some back and forth between the Minister of Education and the Premier on this. You know, if they can do it for what they say they can, for the cost, God bless ’em. I remain skeptical if they’re going to keep campaign promises.

**Interjection:** No.

**Mr Hudak:** I know; I’m usually an optimist. I usually like to believe and hold in faith what I hear in a throne speech, but in this circumstance, forgive me, I’m skeptical.

The other comment—and this was carried by our friend Jamie Wallace in Osprey News. I know it goes throughout northern Ontario and throughout rural On-

tario. His comment on the throne speech: “Rural Ontario became a dirty word.”

**Mr Yakabuski:** Forgotten.

**Mr Hudak:** It was forgotten. I don’t think the word “rural” made it to the throne speech. Like those poor police officers, firefighters, coal-fired plants and the hard cap on class sizes that disappeared into the twilight zone, rural Ontario, under Dalton McGuinty, has become a dirty word.

I’m actually still surprised, now that some time has passed, that there is still no minister responsible for rural affairs. The member for Brantford, for example; I think he’s doing an excellent job as whip and is well respected in the Legislature. I would make him my minister. He would be one of my leading candidates as a minister for rural affairs. Look, you’ve got about 30 of you here tonight. You’re having no trouble. You need more to do. I’m going to suggest to Dalton McGuinty that he needs a minister of rural affairs and one suggestion could be the member for Brantford.

That’s sort of symptomatic of the approach. Obviously, Ontario is a great and diverse province, and helping out the big cities like Toronto, Ottawa and Windsor is important. We’ve got to make sure that the economic engine in urban centres is purring at full capacity and helping to create jobs. That having been said, you can’t do that to the entire detriment of rural Ontario by not even having a minister at the cabinet table responsible for rural affairs, not even mentioning rural Ontario in the throne speech.

Then you look at what’s happening in agriculture. I think my friend from Renfrew was speaking about that earlier this evening. They’re putting the hammer to the farmers. Hydro rates are going up. Erie-Lincoln, I’m proud to say, is one of the leading areas in all of Canada in the feather industry. Whether it’s turkey, chickens or eggs, it’s one of the leading areas. I know your area too, Mr Speaker. Leamington and such are very big into the greenhouse industry, as are we down in the Niagara Peninsula.

2330

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** PoultryFest.

**Mr Hudak:** PoultryFest, exactly. I appreciate the member telling me, and I would invite all the members to come to Smithville for PoultryFest, which is a celebration of what the feather industry does for our community.

You know, the people of Smithville and West Lincoln are an exuberant bunch, a proud bunch. They are going to overcome this huge increase in hydro prices and the other hammers that are being put to the agricultural sector. They’re still going to celebrate PoultryFest next year, no doubt to try to forget about the increase in the hydro rates and the increase in taxes that our farmers are going to have to face, let alone what I suspect is going to become the burdensome approach for the Ministry of the Environment on how farm issues are treated.

I think we would have handled it differently, with a greater role for the Ministry of Agriculture. They’re put-



ting more in the hands of the enforcers for the Ministry of the Environment.

In quick contrast, in 1995, when I sat right back there—I think the member from Mississauga West sits there today. When I came in 1995 and made my own maiden speech, to say with great optimism that we were a government that made promises about what we're going to do as we said we're going to do, re-elected in 1999, I say based on that premise—even if you disagree with some of the things we stood for, we did what we said we were going to do. With the broken promises, with the neglect of rural Ontario, with the attack on agriculture under this government in this throne speech and the growing list of broken promises, I fear that optimism of the members opposite will not be fulfilled.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Churley:** Indeed, I do want to respond to the member from Erie-Lincoln. I didn't get to hear where you're from and all about you—oh no, you did that years ago, your maiden speech.

**Interjection:** Ninety-five.

**Ms Churley:** Back in 1995, that's right, and here you are now, on this side of the House. I just wanted to point that out to the Liberals sitting over there. I must say, they've done a pretty good job of transitioning from opposition into government. Why, if the faces weren't different, I would think that there were Tories sitting over there. The transition has been so great; we hear some of the same phrases. Why, a member over there tonight said, "A promise made is a promise kept." Remember how often the Tories used to say that, even though we'd be standing up—and you then were over there, yelling at them for breaking promises. But they'd say, "A promise made is a promise kept," and now you're saying it. So many of the same arrogant phrases that are coming out of your mouths now remind me of them then.

Ah, yes, but that was then. "That was then." Remember that line? We heard that a lot. How quickly so many of you on that side sound just like them. Some days I'm confused—even the policies. Take the P3 hospitals. It's not just us saying that you broke your promise on that. The Toronto Star, November 22, 2003, said, "The new facilities will be built—"

**Interjection.**

**Ms Churley:** Be careful what you say about the Toronto Star now, Liberal member. "The new facilities will be built and operated virtually the same way as proposed by the former Tory government. The buildings at the William Osler Health Centre in Brampton and the Royal Ottawa Hospital will be built privately and many non-medical services, maintenance, housekeeping, food services, parking, and security will be contracted out." That's the Toronto Star saying that, not just New Democrat members.

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** We listened intently to the member from Erie-Lincoln on this side of the House and it's with some relief, I think, that we learn that he failed to find the virtue in the throne speech. He failed to find it because it's outside of the frame of reference of what's

left of his former government—the idea that things will be done for the people, not because of some rented Republican ideology, not for some backroom backslapping down at the Albany Club, but actually what's in the public interest. He couldn't recognize it if he tripped over it.

The disappointment tonight, of course, is the continued allegiance of the PC-NDP. We see what happens when ideologues are in charge of the province, and we see them stand up in their self-righteousness tonight and wax and wane, mostly wane, unfortunately, about what would have been better in the Nirvana they were bringing us. Most of the things they talk about here tonight weren't even in their platform.

So we see ourselves in between and among, actually, some of the people who put themselves forward on a more ideological bent, and we stand proud on this side of the House with members like the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who put forward a view of this province, a view of its people, that is much more in tune.

We hear the member opposite talk about rural Ontario, a member who represented a rural area and did nothing to save rural schools. I spent time at Humberstone school in his riding, and I call tell you right now that that member and his government let a school that led the province in EQAO tests become a vacant lot. You can go there today and see the tumbleweeds going right across where some kids are still trying to get some recreational advantage, because they painted a bull's eye on top. Well, the other day we called a moratorium on that kind of closing.

We say to the member opposite that the rural areas deserve better. The rural areas are seeking better from the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, from the member for Nipissing, from members on this side of the House. There will be plenty of representation in cabinet when this government has them.

**Mr Dunlop:** I am pleased to rise to speak to the comments made by the member from Erie-Lincoln. He is certainly one of our top members and has a very bright future.

I'd like to go back to some of his comments on rural Ontario. It's very disappointing to hear some of the comments coming from that side of the House tonight and, of course, what we read in the throne speech. First of all, as you folks over there know, nothing was mentioned about rural Ontario in the throne speech, and that's very disappointing.

On top of that, following September 11, 2001, when we had the tragedy across the world, I would have thought firemen and emergency service workers would have continually been brought up in throne speeches and that governments would be interested in what they actually do in our province. Again, nothing at all in the throne speech on our emergency service workers except one pathetic line. I almost felt sorry for the Lieutenant Governor when he had to read this: "A contractor hired to add rooms to the second floor of your house would be negligent if he discovered a fire in the basement—and failed to put it out." Doesn't that seem like the most



pathetic line you've ever seen in any throne speech? Why wouldn't you do that? You would call the firemen automatically, at least, and you failed to put it out. This is about the dumbest line that's ever been put in any throne speech.

Getting back to rural Ontario and Mr Kennedy's comments, it's almost pathetic to hear how little has been said about rural Ontario in this throne speech, about the environment, about our schools, about our health care facilities. Nothing has been said about all the small communities across our province that rely on a strong government to give services to our rural communities. They forgot about rural Ontario in this throne speech, and it's a disgrace that they've done so.

**Mr Hampton:** I listened intently to the member for Erie-Lincoln. Of course, because there is no Leafs game tonight, I was able to give it my undivided attention. I simply want to follow up on a couple of the points that he has made. In fact, I made these points earlier myself.

It would be very interesting, over the next six months, year, or year and a half to see whether the Canadian Taxpayers Federation wins out over there or if the people who said they want to invest in education and invest in health care and invest in protecting the environment win out over there. The reason it will be interesting to see who wins out is because I think most thinking people recognize that you can't be in both camps. When you're forced to actually make governing decisions, you can't be a little bit wet and a little bit dry at the same time. So it will be interesting to watch this.

I noticed earlier that the Minister of Education had something to say. It will be interesting how many more of these announcements we get about, "This is money for literacy, and this is money for people who are challenged in terms of literacy," and you find out that virtually no money went into literacy programs; it was used to cover up the ongoing operating deficit of boards of education for this year. You'll get away with those announcements maybe once, but trying to get away with them twice or trying to get away with them in years to come, I suspect, is going to become more difficult. So it will be interesting to see who wins out: the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and their pledge or the desire and the need to reinvest.

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**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Hudak:** I thank my colleagues for their comments. To the remarks of the member for Toronto-Danforth, she seems to think they were reflecting comments that we made. Were we that arrogant when we were in office?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Hudak:** She says yes. And they're just getting started. This is the first six weeks and they've already hit where we were in our worst days. So they're already there in six weeks' time.

To the member for Parkdale-High Park, who is never one to leave a partisan tool unused, I don't find virtue in

a view that I think is in your throne speech that finds the people of Ontario to be gullible. I think any party that wantonly and smugly goes about breaking campaign commitments in its first number of weeks, a party that when the Toronto Star says, "Jump," its response is, "How high?" and a party that engages in a perpetual campaign and takes great joy in sidelining the opposition rather than finding joy in making the difficult decisions that are necessary to be part of a good government—

**Mr Parsons:** You're talking about the last—

**Mr Hudak:** No, no. I believe the people of Ontario are far better than that. I believe the people of Ontario now have reached a point where they expect governments to do what they said they were going to do. I could be wrong. Maybe at the end of the day you will win out and you will prove that governments can break promises wantonly and smugly, you can sideline the opposition and get re-elected. But folks, I think the people of Ontario are better than that, I think they're smarter than that, and I'm going to fight you every step of the way to prove that point, that as a basic element, people want governments to do what they said they were going to do. Dalton McGuinty, out of the gate, is heading in the opposite direction, with broken promise after broken promise.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** This too is my maiden speech and I'm honoured to be here representing the people of Ottawa West-Nepean. I recall, the first time I came in this beautiful chamber, the story of a young parliamentarian who walked in the chamber for the very first time. He took his seat, looked around and saw the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Speaker, all of these famous cabinet ministers and said with great humility, "How did I ever get here?" Six months later he walked into the same chamber, looked around, looked at the same people and said, "How did they ever get here?" I'm hoping I don't attract that kind of cynicism in my first couple of years here in the Legislature.

On October 2, the people of this province and the people of my riding chose change. They decided to take a different route, a different approach and we were honoured to receive the confidence of the people of Ontario. I was honoured in particular in my own riding to receive the confidence of the people of Ottawa West-Nepean.

Plus de 100 000 résidents se disent être chez eux à Ottawa-West Nepean.

My riding has many distinctions that I'm very proud of, but one that I'm most proud of is the fact that Ottawa West-Nepean has the largest number of senior citizens per capita of any riding in the province. The seniors of Ottawa West-Nepean are a vibrant element of our community and I have cherished my relationship with those seniors since I had the privilege of being mayor of the city of Ottawa.

Whether it's seniors participating at the Alex Dayton Seniors Centre at the Carlingwood Mall, or the wonderful work that Barb Lajeunesse and Michael Mason and the



volunteers at the Old Forge centre do day in and day out, or the wonderful community event I was at on Saturday night at 31 McEwen Street, a Christmas dinner that the seniors had put on, bake sales, bazaars, all of these important things that make up the fabric of the seniors' community, mean a great deal to me. I look forward to working with that seniors community, just as I look forward to working with the many diverse groups that make up my riding.

The old city of Ottawa is about one half of the riding, and the old city of Nepean makes up the other half. I was honoured to serve the Ottawa side as a member of city council from 1991 to 2000. Thanks to great mentors like former Nepean mayor, Mary Pitt, and councillors like Rick Chiarelli and Gord Hunter, I have become very familiar with the many neighbourhoods, communities, parks and people that make up the Nepean side of my riding.

Ottawa-West Nepean is very much a microcosm of the entire province.

I am proud that about 25% of the riding's population are new Canadians. We have some very active communities from countries as diverse as Somalia, Turkey, Lebanon, India, Pakistan, as well as many different parts of Europe and Asia. I want to thank those people for their support and commit to do what it takes to live up to their high standards.

To those of you who have yet to vote for me, I hope to gain your trust through hard work and through dedication here at the Legislature and in my constituency.

My predecessor, Garry Guzzo, ably represented the citizens of Ottawa-West Nepean, and I pay tribute to his public service. I've known Garry for over 10 years and we served together on a number of organizations, including the Central Canada Exhibition. In fact, Garry was one of my predecessors on city council, representing Capital ward.

Capital ward produced a number of interesting characters, including former minister of the Bill Davis government, Claude Bennett, and probably the most well known mayor of the city of Ottawa, who hails from Renfrew, a woman named Charlotte Whitton—I see that got Mr Yakubuski's attention—the first female mayor of a major urban centre in Canada.

Garry was the one who told me probably the most famous story about Charlotte Whitton. She had a quick wit about her and a good sense of humour, and she was meeting the Lord Mayor of London one day back in the 1960s. The Lord Mayor had his chain of office on, all decked out, and Charlotte had a rose in her lapel. The Lord Mayor came to the front door of city hall and said, "Madame Mayor, if I smell your rose, will you blush?" Without missing a beat, Charlotte replied, "My Lord Mayor, if I pull your chain, will you flush?" So she always got the last word in. She in fact served on city council with Garry Guzzo.

Garry has served our community as a councillor, a lawyer, a judge and an MPP, and I wish him well in the next phase of his life.

I also commend my fellow candidates Marlene Rivier from the New Democratic Party and Neil Adair of the Green Party. Both were very good representatives of their respective parties and a real pleasure to work with.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, because they're an important part of our democratic and parliamentary process.

I congratulate the Deputy Speaker on his appointment, not simply because it is customary but because it is well-earned. Before too long, we'll be celebrating the 11th anniversary of Mr Deputy Speaker. His 10th anniversary is today and we congratulate him again.

J'ai eu le plaisir de servir avec deux Présidents de la Chambre des communes à Ottawa, l'honorable John Fraser et l'honorable John Bosley. J'ai un très grand respect pour le Président et son rôle. I have great respect for the role of the Speaker and the importance in this institution.

I recall one time a member of Parliament actually got quite exercised. Of course, we're starting to learn as rookie members of provincial Parliament what you can and can't say in the Legislature and the fact that there are certain things that are considered unparliamentary. I recall one time a veteran member of Parliament told me when one member got up very exercised, very upset, he said of another member, "The honourable member doesn't have the manners of a pig." The Speaker stood up and he said, "That's unparliamentary. You're going to have to withdraw that." The gentleman was quite smart; he said, "Mr Speaker, I withdraw. The honourable member does have the manners of a pig." I hope not to test the Speaker's patience. I do wish you the very best in the chair.

I also want to thank my campaign team for their tremendous effort leading up to October 2. Many of these same people who helped me were good enough to help me in my municipal and regional campaigns over the years. I'd like to thank the over 250 dedicated volunteers, without whose sacrifice and commitment I wouldn't be here today. We all know about the importance of volunteers.

On connaît bien les responsabilités et le devoir des bénévoles dans le système politique.

À mes parents, Frances et Bev, à ma sœur, Jayne, à mon beau-frère, Peter, et à mes nièces Olivia et Nichola, votre amour et votre encouragement ont été une source constante de réconfort et d'inspiration.

**2350**

I'd also like to thank Premier McGuinty for his vote of confidence in choosing me as his first Minister of Consumer and Business Services. I am deeply honoured with this added responsibility, and I want to thank the 1,300 men and women who make up that department. I know the member from Erie-Lincoln knows the dedication of those men and women who serve the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. They're true professionals, very dedicated, and they are a credit to the public service of Ontario. I look forward to working with them and the

many business and consumer stakeholders who rely on the ministry each and every day.

I was struck by a comment that my leader made when accepting his nomination for the provincial Liberal Party on the riding of Ottawa South: "Ontario," he said, "was commissioned by history to play a leadership role in the Canadian federation." This observation reminds us that our charge is great, and the impact of our actions and deliberations will be felt beyond the borders of this great province.

If Ontario suffers, then Canada suffers, and Ontario, sadly, is suffering. We're suffering from a deficit of at least \$5.6 billion, the result of mismanagement and misrepresentation over the years. I fully expect that the sad fiscal state of our province will impel us to make some very difficult choices. We are going to have to collectively tighten our belts. We'll each have to do our own part.

Our undeniable priority is to right the wrong, to balance the budget. By doing so, we can then reduce the unacceptably high waiting lists for hip and knee replacement surgery for the seniors in Ottawa West-Nepean and across the province. We can invest in MRIs. We can keep the children's hospital cardiac unit in Ottawa.

As we heard today, we can hire more water inspectors in our province. We can invest in quality education by implementing limits on class sizes for students in kindergarten to grade 3 in schools like Briargreen and Agincourt and Lakeview, in my riding.

There is so much we can and must achieve. It takes commitments, it takes the right values and of course it takes leadership. But let us begin by defeating the deficit by being more fiscally responsible. But unlike other governments, as the Premier said today, we will not do so on the backs of the most vulnerable in our society. Let us begin by banishing the use of wedge politics and exploiting our fears so common during the reign of the last two Parliaments.

We are here to set a new tone for a new era, a tone of honesty and of respect, and giving the people the straight goods when we table our first budget in this Legislature. The public deserves a government that treats the budget process and the taxpayers' money with respect. To do less is not worthy of the trust Ontarians have put in us.

The throne speech was clear: This government should, and future governments will, show greater respect for democracy and for this Legislature. Politicians and governments they form must continuously earn the trust of their constituents. In order for them to do so, they must embrace the principles of accountability and transparency. The public knows that these two principles are the cornerstones of a functioning democratic system.

Study after study sadly shows that respect for politicians continues to fall. We must ensure that all Ontarians feel that their elected representatives speak on their behalf and act in their interests. If not, voter participation will continue to decline.

In Ontario's last election, the decrease in voter participation was significant. Turnout was just 57%. While I was pleased that the turnout in Ottawa West-Nepean was

higher than the average, was 60%, it is still well below the level it should be.

Exercising one's right to vote is intrinsic to a healthy democracy and a fundamental aspect of keeping governments accountable for their actions. Our goal must be not just to meet the expectations of our fellow citizens but to raise the bar so that they demand more from us, and that we too demand more from each other.

That is why I am so pleased that the Premier has appointed a minister responsible for democratic renewal. This is a sign that this government and this Premier are serious about respecting the Legislature and its members and ultimately the people who put us here.

To those who say people don't care, I say we must appeal to their better natures. As we continue to bring forward commitments to increase the powers of the Provincial Auditor, to fine ministers who miss too many question periods, to end partisan taxpayer-funded advertising, we strengthen the role of Parliament and also ensure that the public's representatives have the authority to carry out the people's business.

Government belongs to the people of Ontario. We must provide the opportunities for the public to participate. The expanded role of government caucus members in policymaking committees will provide a more direct voice for the people of Ontario in the 103 constituencies of this province. We must not play fast and loose with the hopes and dreams of a better Ontario that are so dear to the people of this province.

Just as we want to strengthen the underpinnings of democracy in Ontario, we also want to improve the state of our health care system, our schools and colleges—like Algonquin College, located in my riding—and to improve public safety in our communities. But before we can do all we want to do, we must not only strengthen the province's finances but we must improve the way we conduct our own business.

Democratic renewal is an important first step, and I congratulate the Premier for his foresight in bringing forward these proposals and many more to come.

It is not by chance that I decided to return to public life. A sense of civic duty was instilled in me at an early age by hearing about my grandfather, a local councillor in his village. He taught me that from time to time we will be called upon to represent our community, our neighbours. We all, I believe, want to live up to the words of Henrik Ibsen, who over 100 years ago wrote, "A community is like a ship. Everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm."

We have all been elected to take the helm and help make this province a better place to live and work in. Let us live up to, if not exceed, the expectations of our constituents. Let us create opportunity for everyone in the province of Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being almost 12 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 2358.*



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	<b>Tascona, Joseph N.</b> (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton Mountain	<b>Boutrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie</b> (L) Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	<b>Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona</b> (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	<b>Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London North Centre / London Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London West / -Ouest	<b>Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher</b> (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington- Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	<b>Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S.</b> (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Elgin-Middlesex-London	<b>Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve</b> (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga East / -Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Essex	<b>Crozier, Bruce</b> (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
		Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
		Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa South / -Sud	<b>McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton</b> (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	<b>Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim</b> (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Sudbury	<b>Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick</b> (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	<b>Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine</b> (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	<b>Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard</b> (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timiskaming-Cochrane	<b>Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	<b>Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George</b> (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	<b>Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg</b> (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	<b>Arnott, Ted</b> (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	<b>Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra</b> (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough East / -Est	<b>Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V.</b> (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	Windsor-St Clair	<b>Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight</b> (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York Centre / -Centre	<b>Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte</b> (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough-Agincourt	<b>Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry</b> (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough-Rouge River	<b>Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin</b> (L) Speaker / Président	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	<b>Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph</b> (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	<b>Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J.</b> (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael</b> (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 16 December 2003

Mardi 16 décembre 2003

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers





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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I've noticed that there was no ringing of the bells. I think somehow there is some malfunction and there was no ringing of the bells. But we're still proceeding on time.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### TAXATION

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Liberals must be very proud. They now hold the record for introducing the largest tax hike in Ontario history. Not even Bob Rae introduced a tax hike as large as this government's. Their tax increase on business will cost \$2.2 billion per year. Not only will business owners and shareholders pay for this tax increase, we will all pay through higher prices.

The highest prices, however, will be paid by Ontario workers who lose their jobs because of the Liberal tax hike. Liberals don't understand that our businesses are job creators, that every tax increase on business means men and women in Ontario will lose their jobs. Liberals don't understand that it is entrepreneurs and business owners who create jobs in our society. Liberals don't understand that high taxes drive away business and investment. Investors today have many options. If they do not see Ontario as a competitive environment, they will take their money to Michigan or New York.

Conservatives do understand that tax cuts create jobs. That's why we will not only oppose raising taxes, but we were going to cut taxes even more. It's time for this government to end its attack on growth and jobs in Ontario.

#### JOHN FRANKEN

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** Edmund Burke once wrote that "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." It is my privilege to introduce to this assembly a truly good man, who has attempted almost single-handedly for the past 50 years to do what is right. John Franken is an 81-year-old, proud Canadian citizen who, while serving in the Dutch navy in World War II, was captured by the Japanese and held as a prisoner of war for almost four years, personally tortured and subjected to years of inhumane treatment. Mr Franken was an eyewitness to a litany of war crimes

committed by Japanese military and occupying forces. Mr Franken is in the visitors' gallery. Would he please rise?

*Applause.*

**Mr Delaney:** Mr Franken was a slave labourer in Nagasaki when the atomic bomb fell on that city. He survived this explosion because he was working deep in a mine under the city. Freed by the sudden capitulation of the Japanese regime, Mr Franken has for the past 50 years attempted to obtain a formal apology from the Japanese government on behalf of himself and the known and nameless victims of Japanese war crimes. Let us hope that through Mr Franken's tireless efforts the Japanese government will at long last adopt the honourable course and issue a formal apology to the dwindling number of surviving victims of Japan's aggression and war crimes in World War II.

#### EVENTS IN PARRY SOUND

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Today I would like to recognize Christopher Jones of Parry Sound. Christopher is a violin student. In November he received the medal for excellence from Conservatory Canada for the highest mark received in Ontario for grade 4 violin. The medal for excellence is awarded to the candidate who receives the highest mark in each grade for each province for the academic year. A minimum mark of 85% is required to qualify for the award. Medals are awarded in each practical instrument area, as well as for theory and history. To be eligible, candidates must complete the examination in one sitting and also must have completed successfully all the prescribed theory and history co-requisites.

Christopher's teacher, Helen Elsaessar, has been teaching in the area for a number of years, and many of her students have been recognized with distinction by the conservatory. I would like to personally congratulate Christopher on his tremendous accomplishment.

I would also like to congratulate Parry Sound's Festival of the Sound for receiving the ninth annual Lieutenant Governor's Award for the Arts. This esteemed award recognizes an Ontario-based arts organization that maintains a high level of artistic excellence while demonstrating exceptional community and private sector support. The Festival of the Sound received \$10,000 as part of this prestigious prize. The award was presented by Lieutenant Governor James K. Bartleman to festival president Patricia Mueller and executive director Margaret Boyd. Congratulations to the Festival of the



Sound and supporters, volunteers and board members on this significant accomplishment.

### BSE

**Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce):** As the member for Huron-Bruce, I know first-hand that a single incident of BSE in western Canada has brought broad economic, financial and social impacts to Ontario and has affected all sectors. Nearly \$6 billion in losses have been incurred so far. These losses can be found in sectors such as cow-calf, feeder, kill credits, dairy, breeding and meat exports across Canada. There have been negative impacts to the supply chain, from packing plants to consumers. Lost secondary industry suppliers include truckers, feed companies, veterinarians and machinery dealers.

As we lose our competitive world position, we lose our rural infrastructure and the viability of our small communities. There are growing levels of stress and despair.

That is why I stand here before you today to raise awareness of people across Ontario. I feel it's my duty to those constituents who are directly affected, particularly those in my riding of Huron-Bruce. They need to be assured that I understand the impact, as do my fellow members, while they continue to deal with the restrictions at the border.

I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make this statement and continue to remind this Legislature that this single incident of mad cow is still causing a large impact on this industry.

1340

### VOLUNTEERS

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** I want to take a moment during this busy time of year to recognize the supreme efforts of the volunteers with the Renfrew county and district branch of the Canadian Red Cross Society. These volunteers have been busy knitting 1,200 pairs of mittens for disadvantaged children. This is something they have done in each of the past 10 years. Some 640 pairs have already been given to the Salvation Army this year. The remainder will be donated to a women's shelter and various schools and churches. Thank you and a Merry Christmas to these wonderful people.

And while we're on the subject of special people donating what they do best to their community, I would also like to mention the Madawaska Valley District High School student band, under the direction of Mark Robbins, and the Community Christmas Choir, under the direction of Erin Morlock. My wife, Vicky, and I attended their 15th annual Sounds of Christmas performance this past Sunday night, and listening to them was indeed a gift to behold.

Congratulations and thank you to the Renfrew county Red Cross, the Madawaska Valley District High School band, the Community Christmas Choir, and all the other

wonderful citizens of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke who so generously share their time and talents at Christmastime.

### HANUKKAH

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** This Friday, Jewish families will sit down together across Ontario—in fact, across the world—to celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

Hanukkah centres on the lighting of the eight candles of the menorah. One additional candle is lit on every subsequent night until eight nights have passed and all eight candles are lit. This tradition of lighting the menorah and celebrating Hanukkah goes back over 2,000 years. The story of Hanukkah started in the land of Judea, today called Israel, where the Jewish people were ruled by an oppressive king and were ordered to reject their religion. The Jewish people rose up against their oppressors, led by the valiant Judah Maccabee and his four brothers. After three years of fighting, the Maccabee army was finally successful in driving out the oppressive regime.

Their victory was symbolized by the reclamation of the holy temple in Jerusalem. However, the holy temple had been desecrated and its eternal flame had been extinguished. After restoring the temple, the Maccabees could only find enough oil to light the eternal flame for one day, but eight days were needed to make more oil to keep the eternal flame burning. The flame was lit anyway, but to everyone's joy and amazement, the flame continued to burn for eight days, enough time to replenish the oil. This was truly a miracle.

This is the miracle of Hanukkah, which is celebrated by Jewish families in every corner of the world to this day. I want to wish all the Jewish families in Eglinton-Lawrence, throughout Toronto, throughout Ontario and throughout the world a happy and holy Hanukkah for everyone.

### SENIOR CITIZENS

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** I rise to address the government's broken promise to remove the 4.3-cent electricity rate cap and its impact on senior citizens. With yesterday's passing of higher hydro rates, this government has once again punished seniors living on fixed incomes. Seniors, who require electricity as a necessity of life, will face up to 30% increases in their monthly hydro bills, and seniors living in apartment buildings will be forced to pay the higher rate of 5.5 cents for their hydro if their buildings do not have individual metering.

In his statement to the standing committee, the Minister of Energy said, "Consumer protection will be the hallmark of this government's electricity policy," yet the Liberals refused to listen when amendments to the bill were tabled that would have afforded more protection for our most vulnerable citizens.

This is a far cry from their position while in opposition. Before the election, McGuinty said, "We have to

maintain rate relief for consumers. I have had the terrible responsibility to raise horror stories in the Legislature, people who have been put in a desperate position because they simply can't afford to pay their hydro."

Before the election, the Minister of Energy said that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals will protect consumers, protect average Ontarians and put the interests of average people ahead of the big corporate interests in Ontario. No protection from Hydro rate increases, no property tax credit protection and no drug plan protection; why is it that this Liberal government continues to target seniors with their punitive, punishing policies?

### BIRTH CERTIFICATES

**Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga):** One year ago this month, Tim Hudak was warned. Norman Inkster told the former Minister of Consumer and Business Services to end same-day service for birth certificates in December 2002. Hudak was informed that the system presented a serious security risk and that thorough procedures were necessary to protect these vital documents. Advice from the retired commissioner of the RCMP is not something to be shrugged off, particularly for a former government that liked to talk up public security. But Tim Hudak turned his back on this warning and turned his back on public security.

Same-day service continued and people were able to—

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** On a point of order, Speaker: I do believe the standing orders prohibit a member from impugning motive of the efforts or the motive of another member. To say that the minister planned to be punitive has been struck down by many Speakers in this House.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Member?

**Mr Dhillon:** Same-day service continued and people were able to get birth certificates and documents used to obtain things like passports and driver's licences. Perhaps Tim Hudak considers showing identification for a government document to be another example of that pesky red tape he so despises, or perhaps he was just too busy organizing another pro-war rally through his riding association. We shouldn't be surprised.

This is the same former government that allowed 500 blank birth certificates to be stolen and then covered it up. The previous government was warned about a lot of things and consistently failed to act.

Unlike the previous government, the Liberal government has moved quickly to close this loophole to ensure the security of all Ontarians and make sure the government works for the people for a change. I commend the Minister of Consumer and Business Services for swift action.

### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I rise in the House today to dispel the myths shown in the province's

projected artificial deficit. The reality is that the Liberals can actually balance the province's books before the end of this fiscal year. The choice is theirs.

I was pleased to read an article in today's National Post, written by John Williamson and Bruce Winchester from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, that helps clarify the projected deficit number. The article is called "Ontario's Deficit Cut Down to Size." It defines the dramatic impact of the following three factors on Erik Peters's deficit projection: the province's 2002-03 public accounts, more federal tax dollars coming from Mr Martin than Mr Manley, and of course McGuinty's tax increases. I really hope that the Premier and our Minister of Finance read this article, because here's the bottom line: The revised projected deficit for 2003-04 is \$1.8 billion.

Since Dalton McGuinty maintained in opposition, and during the election, that he had a plan to deal with a \$2-billion deficit, this good news should make the job that much easier. However, we do expect the Liberals to pump up the projected deficit numbers, as they've been doing all along, to give them some spending room. After all, many special interests are waiting with hands outstretched for their paybacks from the election.

We ask Dalton McGuinty to give Ontarians the real financial picture and get on with the job he was elected to do. Ontarians deserve nothing less.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Name a special interest—like kids?

**Mr Dunlop:** The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should be more worried about Bill 8 than heckling me.

### ADAMS MINE

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** This morning my colleague Marilyn Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, held a press conference here with the Timiskaming farmers' association. They were here yet again to ring the alarm bells on the Adams mine proposal. It's clear: Prior to the election the Liberals, like New Democrats, were supposedly in opposition to the Adams mine project. In fact, I know that the current Premier, then leader of the official opportunity—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** That was a good one. I should have said "opposition." "Opportune" is the right word. He was on the record saying that if he was elected, the Adams mine project would not go forward. Now we have a situation where the TFA has pointed out that the proponent of the plan has applied for a permit to de-water the pit. They were here this morning to talk about the problems with that.

1350

Number one is that if there is ever an environmental assessment done and it's done with the pit drained of water, the whole science of being able to figure out what happens to groundwater is totally different. Obviously if there's water in the pit, it leaches out the side. If there's



no water in the pit, whatever leaches will go straight down and will not be caught in an environmental assessment.

We're saying to the government two things: Keep your commitment; don't break your promise. Stop the Adams mine proposal. My good friend Mr Ramsay and I are on the same side, saying stop it and stop the environmental permit that allows the water to be taken out of that pit.

### MEMBERS' CONDUCT

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Let me first commend the members for using the members' statements time for recognizing individuals in the gallery. I really appreciate that, more than using it calling about points of order at the time. That's a most appropriate way to use members' statements, and I want to thank those members who have used it that way.

I also would caution some members on some of the language they're using that is a bit questionable. So be careful as you make statements that those languages you use are not in any way punitive, as one would say, toward other members.

### VISITORS

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the east gallery today are two guests. Statements are now finished, and I thought maybe it would be appropriate to invite Mr Keith Koski and Mr Steve Wood to receive our recognition. They are developing processes for our environment, for our health care system and, for the environment, in particular areas of agriculture. Thank you very much for being here, gentlemen.

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm rising on a point of order regarding the business of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

While we on this side of the House recognize the fact that the business of the standing committee has been timetabled according to government notice of motion 13, referred to as the programming motion, which was passed by this House and supported by the official opposition, I have to raise an exception with respect to yesterday's proceedings of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. The official opposition agreed to the programming motion on the basis that two full days of committee hearings would be devoted to each of the three bills to which the programming motion applies. I want to quote from the programming motion itself as it pertains to Bill 5, currently before the finance and economic affairs committee.

From section (C), sub 3, of the motion, "The standing committee on finance and economic affairs shall meet for two days at the call of the Chair for the purpose of public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of the bill." It was understood and agreed upon by the subcommittee that the first full day of committee would be devoted to public hearings, while the second day would be devoted to clause-by-clause consideration.

Speaker, as you know, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs is made up of 10 members—seven Liberals, two Conservatives and a single New Democrat—and quorum for the committee is half of the members as per standing order 118(a). At yesterday afternoon's meeting of the committee, the Liberal Chair adjourned the committee proceedings for the day for a lack of quorum from government Liberal members. I'm not disputing the right of the Chair to adjourn committee for want of quorum, as this is again specified in standing order 118.

Simply put, my point of order relates to the fact that the programming motion specifies that public hearings must be heard with respect to Bill 5. Further, the subcommittee of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs met and determined that the first full day of committee consideration would be devoted to public hearings. This was not the case yesterday, and indeed several public witnesses and stakeholders were stranded because Liberal government members failed to show up to allow the committee to proceed. I wouldn't suggest it was a strategy, but it's difficult to understand with a large majority government in this House.

I would ask that you consider our request to allow for one full day of public consultations before this bill is referred back to the House. This is in keeping with the intent and spirit of the programming motion.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** With respect to the programming motion, I should say first of all that it was government members who were absent. We were distressed by that and apologize to this House and to those individual delegations that were affected by it.

My understanding is that the committee met informally subsequent to the arrival of the government members of the committee and heard the delegations that wished to be heard. My understanding is that the hearing proceeded this morning on clause-by-clause. Our read is that section (C), subs 3 and 4, provides an opportunity for what occurred to have happened without having to go back to another day of hearings. Those delegations were met with. The government acknowledges it was its members who were not present. Again, I wish to emphasize that those delegations that were scheduled to be heard by the committee were in fact heard by the committee, as I understand it, subsequent to the committee being adjourned.

With that, I would submit that while the government was in error in not having its members present, the programming motion was upheld, both in its letter and spirit—recognizing that members have a responsibility to

be present in committee when it's duly called, when proper notice is given out and that that sort of inattentiveness reflects badly on this House and on all of us and on the government.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On the same point, Mr Speaker: I don't want to repeat all the points that were made, but I think an additional point needs to be added here. What we had yesterday by the government members not showing up in committee to complete what was intended by way of the programming motion was that in fact the government further time-allocated this bill, because by the members not being there, it shortened the amount of time the public had to come to the committee and therefore further time-allocated the bill.

I want to put on the record that New Democrats did not support the programming motion for the very reasons that we laid out in a point of order earlier, but I do want to point out that what they've in fact done by not showing up yesterday afternoon is to further time-allocate this, which is contrary to what the programming motion said. I would support the Conservative request on this, that additional time is needed at committee, to keep not only to what's in the spirit of the programming motion, but what the intent was, which was for two full days to deal with both committee hearings and also clause-by-clause.

It's unfortunate that the government members didn't show up. I take the government House leader at his word when he says he apologizes. I'm sure they wish they had been there, but the fact is they weren't. I would ask that in your ruling you reflect on what the effect of those members not being there yesterday was, which was to further time-allocate a bill that was already time-allocated by way of the programming motion, and would ask that we have additional time at committee to deal with this adequately.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** Speaker, I want you as well to take into consideration the fact that albeit the committee may well have met informally, as the government House leader indicates, not having met officially with the benefit of the Hansard record really denies every other member of this House the opportunity to consider the information that was presented by those who came forward. Again, for that reason I really do believe that we all—each member of this House—have a responsibility to consider the information so that we have an opportunity to provide input into the legislative process. Not only is it right for the stakeholders but for every member of this House that we have that full day of hearings.

1400

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Mr Speaker, as a member of the finance and economic affairs committee, I believe there were good intentions in trying to reach some expeditious resolve to the issue of the Liberal members not showing up yesterday afternoon after routine proceedings. That being said, out of respect for the deputants who did appear, their record was submitted—a written, photocopied version today. But what was missing was the important debate and interchange between

members of all three caucuses and those industry stakeholders, who, by the way, had some very valid suggestions on emissions within the legislation. So in your reflections, Mr Speaker, I'd ask you to reflect on the fact that this is a dialogue with the public that has been shortened through the lack of democratic process on the part of this government.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Just one further small point, Mr Speaker: My understanding is that the written deputations were put into the record formally as part of those deliberations this morning.

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Are you going to add something new to this?

**Mr Barrett:** Just to rebut. Yes, the deputations were put into the record, but as the member across the way has mentioned, there was much discussion by members of the committee around those deputations. None of that discussion and debate was captured electronically. That is lost.

**The Speaker:** Let me reflect on this a bit. You made some excellent points. I just want to make sure that the representatives who came before the committee were heard and that they were not denied in any way. The government House leader has reflected on that too. There seemed to be some provisions made. I will come back to you with my observations and ruling on this.

## VISITORS

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to introduce the Dumand family from my riding of Durham.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On the original point of order—

**Mr O'Toole:** With your indulgence, I have the floor.

I'd like everyone to welcome Herve and Joanne Dumand, and their three children, Joshaua, Tessa and Sommer. I'd like everyone to welcome them and extend a Merry Christmas to them.

**Mr Bisson:** On the original point of order, Mr Speaker: Very quickly, I just want you to really reflect on the fact that by the members not being there, they further time-allocated this. You need to take that into—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. I think I said that I'd get back to you on this. I've heard enough and I think I'll be able to make a decision on what I've heard.

## REPORT, CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I beg to inform the House that on December 15, 2003, a report from the chief election officer, made pursuant to section 2(4) of the Election Finances Act, was tabled.



## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Standing order 62(a) provides that, "The standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year."

The House not having received the report from the standing committee on estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, November 20, 2003, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 62(b), the estimates before the committee of the:

Office of the Assembly;  
Office of the Chief Election Officer;  
Ombudsman Ontario;  
Office of the Provincial Auditor;  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, supplementary estimates only;  
Management Board Secretariat, supplementary estimates only;

are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 60, the estimates, 2003-04, of these ministries and offices not being selected for consideration are deemed to be received and concurred in.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / *Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gerretsen?

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** Mr Speaker, I will defer until ministerial statements.

### SUPPLY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2003

Mr Sorbara moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 /

*Projet de loi 28, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2004.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** Very briefly, this bill is what we commonly refer to and what is actually named the Supply Act, 2003. It is the parliamentary authorization to make expenditures in respect of the public service, investments by the public service, expenses of the Legislative Assembly and expenditures of the public service.

### ELECTRONIC WASTE PRODUCER

#### RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES PRODUCTEURS DE DÉCHETS ÉLECTRONIQUES

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to ensure that the producers of electronic equipment retain responsibility when their products become waste / *Projet de loi 29, Loi visant à assurer que les producteurs de matériel électronique sont toujours responsables lorsque leurs produits deviennent des déchets.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** The only way we're going to resolve the garbage crisis is to get more and more of the so-called garbage out of the garbage stream. This bill would go a long way to helping that situation by requiring producers of electronic equipment to implement a program for ensuring the environmentally sound collection, treatment, recovery and final disposition of discarded and obsolete electronic equipment. As you know, daily there are tonnes and tonnes of obsolete and unused electronic equipment going into our landfills. Landfilling and incineration of electronic waste would be prohibited.

1410

### ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM AMENDMENT ACT (FAIRNESS IN DISABILITY INCOME SUPPORT PAYMENTS), 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PROGRAMME ONTARIEN DE SOUTIEN AUX PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES (ÉQUITÉ DANS LES VERSEMENTS DU SOUTIEN DU REVENU)

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 to require annual cost-of-living adjustments to income support payments / *Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées en vue*

d'exiger des rajustements annuels relatifs au coût de la vie en ce qui concerne les versements du soutien du revenu.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** This is the third time that this bill has been introduced by New Democrats; the first time was in 2001. If passed, the bill would amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act to provide for regulations to ensure annual cost-of-living adjustments to ODSP payments.

You'll know that Ontarians with disabilities have had their ODSP benefits frozen for many years now, and they deserve to see an increase in their payments.

I look forward to support from the government, since the Premier himself promised a cost-of-living increase for ODSP participants in a letter dated April 7, 2003, sent to David Lepofsky, the chair of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. I would hope that the government would do this even without my bill having to go forward.

## MOTIONS

### CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the third party, and ask that the question on the motion be put without debate or amendment.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Do we have unanimous consent that this motion be put forward without any debate? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I believe I have to read the motion into the record.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** One second here. I thought I got unanimous consent so that the government House leader could read the motion.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I move that the House recommends that notwithstanding any standing order or prior recommendation of the House, the Speaker conduct the proceedings of the House during the 38th Parliament as follows:

The Speaker should exercise his discretion to permit questions as follows:

Official opposition—one question and two supplementary questions

Official opposition—one question and two supplementary questions

Third party—one question and one supplementary question

Third party—one question and one supplementary question

Followed by a rotation of:

Official opposition—one question and one supplementary question

Government—one question and one supplementary question

Official opposition—one question and one supplementary question

Government—one question and one supplementary question

Any one independent member—one question and one supplementary question repeated thereafter;

And that there shall be four members' statements allotted to both the government and the official opposition and one members' statement allotted to the third party, with the rotation as follows:

Official opposition; government; official opposition; government; third party; government; official opposition; government; official opposition;

And that in exercising his discretion with respect to the practice of rotation on debates pursuant to standing order 24, the Speaker adopt the following rotation:

Following the leadoff speaker for each recognized party:

The first member of the third party to speak may speak for not more than 30 minutes, then:

Government; official opposition; government; official opposition; third party, and then repeat the rotation;

And, in debate governed by this standing order any member of the third party may divide his or her time among any other member or members of the third party;

And that following ministerial statements and the comments of the official opposition a member or members of the third party may comment for up to a total of five minutes;

And that the third party shall be entitled to one of the five sessional days known as opposition days and that 15% of the time available for debate under standing order 42 shall be allocated to the third party with the time remaining apportioned equally between the recognized parties; and if the mover of a motion under this standing order is a member of the third party the time for a reply shall be included in the time allocated to the third party;

And that in any session, the third party shall be entitled, upon proper notice, to one of the three motions of want of confidence in the government and debate time on such a motion shall be apportioned in the same manner set out in this motion for opposition days;

And that with respect to the time available for debate on time allocation motions (standing order 46), concurrences (standing order 62), Supply Act (standing order 63), and interim supply (standing order 66), 15% of the time available for debate on each such matter shall be allocated to the third party with the time remaining apportioned equally between the recognized parties;

And that a member of the third party on the standing committee on estimates may speak for not more than 30 minutes on the first item of the first vote of each set of estimates and thereafter shall be apportioned an amount of time equal to that allocated to the members of recognized parties on the committee;



And that when time permits, amendments proposed to be moved to bills in any committee shall be distributed to all members of the committee;

And that for the purpose of private members' public business, a period of 18 minutes shall be allotted to each of the recognized parties in the House and nine minutes to the third party for the purpose of debate during private members' public business;

And that a member of the third party on any standing committee is entitled to be appointed to the subcommittee on committee business;

And that with respect to committee membership, members of the third party be allowed to substitute for each other, provided a notification signed by the member being substituted for or by his or her designate is filed with the clerk of the committee either before or within 30 minutes of a committee meeting being called to order;

And that with respect to compendiums of information, government notices of motion or any document required to be laid before the House, for which there is a standing order requirement that copies be provided to a representative or representatives of a recognized party, seven copies of such documents shall be provided to the table to be made available to members of the third party upon request;

And that the passage of any motion to amend the standing orders, which alters the numeration, shall not impact on any process set out in this motion.

**The Speaker:** Is it the wish of the House that the motion carry? Did I hear a no?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think I heard the "ayes" louder than the "nays." Carried.

Before I move to statements by the ministry and responses, I just want to say with regard to this motion that has just been passed, let us be more or less cautious as we go along, as it is a new process and it's in effect immediately. We will guide you through this with the help of the Clerk, and of course we'll have a very peaceful and a very effective Parliament today.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### LAND DEVELOPMENT

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** The region of Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe is growing by 115,000 people every year. Within 15 years, it will be the third-largest urban region in North America after New York and Los Angeles.

This phenomenal growth has presented many tough economic, environmental and quality of life challenges for the millions of people living and working in the region.

Under the previous government, too often developments got the green light where communities did not want them, could not sustain them, and subsequently regretted them. This form of urban planning only encouraged urban sprawl and is simply not sustainable.

Our economy cannot thrive if goods and services are stuck in gridlock. Our families cannot thrive if parents are stuck on the highway or there's no green space left to enjoy. Our environment will not thrive if development is unfettered and irresponsible.

Our government is determined to enhance the quality of life for people in the Golden Horseshoe by containing sprawl and encouraging environmental protection.

This commitment includes the creation of a permanent greenbelt, which will protect hundreds of thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland.

**1420**

Earlier today I took the first steps in the establishment of this greenbelt. I imposed a minister's zoning order on the greenbelt study area to provide immediate protection while the legislation is considered by the House.

Under this bill, the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, which I'm pleased to introduce on behalf of myself and the Minister of the Environment, the government will seek a legislated one-year moratorium on new urban development on rural and agricultural lands within the potential greenbelt area. Pending a final decision on the lands to be protected, the moratorium would mean that for up to one year there could be no new urban development on rural and agricultural land unless it had already been zoned for development.

These actions will give the government the time it needs to hold extensive public discussions to ensure a future of smart and sustainable growth for the greenbelt region. The actions are essentially first steps in the establishment of a permanent greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe region. The health of the Golden Horseshoe lands affects the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe. These are natural gifts we must leave to our children, resources that must be preserved for the physical, social and economic health of future generations of Ontarians.

Ontarians understand that a strong economy and clean environment go hand in hand, and so does this government. Today, through the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Environment, we are acting to make real, positive change to the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe region.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Responses?

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Yesterday the minister introduced amendments to the Planning Act that purport to give more powers to the municipalities to make planning decisions. In fact, in his remarks yesterday he went to great lengths to explain several times the importance that the legislation he introduced yesterday would have in building stronger communities by giving them this kind of decision-making.

Well, today we are looking at a bill that takes away that local planning power from municipalities. It



completely takes it away. The plan that has been given to us today will concentrate power over these issues in the Premier's office via the minister's stroke of the pen. The government's interest seems to be only in stopping all development around Toronto.

With an increase in the population in the whole of the greater Toronto area, we need planning. We need to understand the kinds of restrictions and the questions around transit and things like that. Instead, we're left with some very serious questions to answer. Who, in this Liberal world, will have the final say in the development of our local communities? How much will this cost? Will this cost be even more than it would have cost the Liberals to cancel the construction of the 6,600 homes in Richmond Hill? If all the land around Toronto is closed to development, where are families going to find affordable homes? How does the minister plan on protecting property rights under this bill? He refers today to a moratorium, a freeze. This is all language that belies the benign nature of a bill that will protect green spaces. If this bill protects green spaces, how will it protect viable agriculture?

I'll leave the rest of the time to the member from Erie-Lincoln to add some comments to this.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I appreciate the time to address the issues as well. As my colleague was saying, we look forward to a full opportunity to participate in public consultations. I expect members of our party and the third party will be there side by side with the minister to hear what folks have to say.

I think there should be a healthy scepticism about your intentions: witness the breaking of the Premier's solemn promise to end development on the Oak Ridges moraine, which he quickly back-flipped on once he came into office, and the domino effect that is having on the very sensitive land in the Seaton area and the agricultural preserve in Pickering, on which we've seen backtracking by the minister already. So I hate to be sceptical—I wish I were an optimist—but you've already broken a number of promises on your greenbelt as it is.

If you're preserving areas like the tender fruit lands in Niagara, which I support—I want to see those lands continue to be in green production—my basic piece of advice is, if you're going to preserve the farm, you've got to support the farmer. The attack we've seen on Ontario farmers by the Dalton McGuinty government, with higher taxes, higher hydro rates and the hammer of red tape coming down from the Ministry of the Environment, certainly does not bode well for agriculture in Ontario under Dalton McGuinty, and the total absence of a minister for rural affairs at the cabinet table does not bode well for your intentions.

I'd advise the minister as well—I think people are nervous about the potential creation, either through the Premier's office or outside, of a super-agency over top of all of these areas. As you know, Minister, many of the areas already have legislation, like Oak Ridges, or ministerial zoning orders for the lands in Pickering, the Rouge Park area and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I am

concerned that you're going to have a super-body that is going to duplicate existing functions on top of that, far away from the people. Not only are you taking away local decision-making from the municipal level, you're going to put it up another level altogether with duplication.

Finally, a caution about a mode effect. If your greenbelt is going to be fully contiguous, how are you going to make sure that the routes for infrastructure or highway development like the mid-peninsula corridor allow a chance for trade, tourism and safe travel to flourish?

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I want to say to the government and the minister, I really did want to be able to compliment them today on this piece of legislation. I really did seriously want to compliment them, but I can't because I've had the opportunity to—

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** Well, do it, Marilyn; just do it.

**Ms Churley:** Listen to me: You're going to have to fix this. I've got to study it more carefully, but I've had a chance to look at it and there are some big problems.

Let's look at the background here. It could take up to three years, or I don't know how long, to draft the legislation. This is just a one-year study you're talking about here. As you know, in two or three years, Ontario could lose up to 25,000 acres to sprawl in areas such as Caledon, Seaton, Oakville and Markham. We know there are all kinds of industries and corporations buying up farmland, hoping they'll get the green light on development.

I had a chance to have a quick look at this draft legislation—thank goodness it's draft legislation—before us today. As I said, it is a study; it's not protection. It's for one year only.

I want people to turn their attention to section 8 in the regulations. Talk about another piece of important legislation with a huge loophole that you can drive a Mack truck through; once again, this is it. Look at section 8. I will read it to you:

“8(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

“(a) changing the boundaries of the greenbelt study area set out in schedule 1;

“(b) changing the areas set out in schedule 2 to which sections 4, 5 and 6 apply;

“(c) exempting any land or any use of land, or any class of uses of land, from sections 4, 5 or 6.”

And it goes on:

“Regulations by minister

“(2) The minister may make regulations....”

Folks, do you know what this means, this big loophole that you can drive a Mack truck through? Developers go to the minister's office, there are some problems, and the minister decides, “We've got to let them go ahead.” He can just walk around to a few ministers, just like the Tories used to do, and get them to sign off. That's what this section allows the minister to do. We don't need loopholes like this when we have such a tremendous problem on our hands.



The definition of urban use—another problem—can be changed by regulation as well. See section 9. The minister has the ability to change at a whim the definition of urban use.

1430

Folks, let me tell you what else is in this: The Oak Ridges moraine has been excluded from this greenbelt study today. Surprise, surprise. It's not even in there. Why would that be? What plans are coming after the failure to keep their promise to keep those over 6,000 homes from being built? Why is the Oak Ridges—

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** It's a conspiracy.

**Ms Churley:** What was that? You want the spirit of co-operation today? Conspiracy? This is not a conspiracy, it's right here in your own bill today. The minister can change any of this.

I want to remind you, as we speak, we have underway right now the north Leslie Street lands at the OMB. They're considering several proposals by developers for changes from rural to urban designations. The proposed development for the lands near north Leslie Street in Richmond Hill was exhibit A in the Liberals' commitment to protect the Oak Ridges moraine and the headwaters of the Rouge River. These are prime lands for inclusion in the greenbelt, so why are they not included in this legislation today?

I've got to say to the government that I am honestly and truly disappointed today. I was really looking forward to reading a strong piece of legislation that truly would create this promised greenbelt, and instead we get this one-year study that allows the minister, at a whim, if developers come to see him, to change definitions, to allow development anywhere he wants within this greenbelt. Believe me, there is a big problem here.

I want to say this, and I say it with sadness more than anything else today. Dalton McGuinty has created—today he's receiving a black belt in breaking promises. Dalton McGuinty, mark my word today, has broken another key promise and has gotten a black belt in broken promises in this province. I hope we can fix this at committee because as it stands it won't do a darned thing to prevent development in this greenbelt area.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Today I'd like to return to the issue of another broken Liberal promise, a promise to balance Ontario's budget, so my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday we showed you where you could find \$3 billion to help balance the budget. Today I want to tell you where you can find another \$1 billion. Former Finance Minister John Manley, before he departed office, confirmed that he would be flowing \$1 billion to the Ontario government for both SARS and for the CHST, to provide health

care for the people of Ontario. Will you count that \$1 billion toward Ontario's financial challenges?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I can't tell you how delighted I am with the suggestions coming from the soon-to-be candidate for leader of the official opposition. I congratulate him on his work. That's on the basis that he doesn't jump ship and try to get a seat in the other House. No, I'm wrong; that's the member from Leeds-Grenville.

My friend raises two points: The agreement we finally reached with the federal government, which the previous government couldn't reach, on SARS funding, and indeed that will form part of the revenues for this year. As far as the transfer under the Canada health and social transfer, I want to remind my friend—I don't know how many times I've said this to him, but he needs to understand that that payment remains contingent. It remains a commitment that will come to us, if all the contingencies are met, in October of next year. That is part of next year's budget and it will be part of next year's financial plan.

**Mr Baird:** It's not just John Baird and Ernie Eves who say you can apply this \$1 billion to Ontario's fiscal challenges this year; it's also your good friend John Manley. He was quoted recently as saying, "I believe that with our method of accounting in Ontario and Canada, it can count this year." In fact, they will count it as an expenditure this year.

Why don't you stop the blame game? Why don't you do the right thing? Why don't you put this billion dollars toward the financial pressures of the government this year? Do you want to balance the budget? Do you want to accept your responsibilities and put this billion dollars toward our financial challenges?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** This is the member who as Minister of Energy told us that everything was just fine, "We've got it all under control." Well, the people of Ontario heard today the problems that we're inheriting at OPG.

But let me get to the substance of his question. I have talked with the former finance minister, and we could use a wide variety of accounting tricks.

**Mr Baird:** You get a cheque and you deposit it. How is that a trick?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** He says, "You get a cheque and you deposit it." That is precisely what we're proposing to do. That cheque will arrive, if it arrives, next October. We're very grateful to the federal government for their consideration. We will book it when we receive it.

**Mr Baird:** On this issue, I certainly agree with John Manley. John Williamson and Bruce Winchester of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation also strongly disagree with you. This morning in the National Post, they wrote, "Regrettably, the McGuinty government has decided it will not record any of this ... current fiscal year" revenue, preferring instead to pump up the deficit and make the financial situation artificially worse.

When will you keep your promise that you made just a few short months ago to the people of Ontario and



balance the budget? When will you apply this money toward the budget this year, just as John Manley says you can do?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I say to you that my friend should not get me started on John Williamson, head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, for whom I have a great deal of respect. But when he makes suggestions that we identify another \$2.1 billion in revenue, while ignoring the fact that on the other side of the ledger there is a \$2.8-billion expenditure that would have to be brought in, I tell my friend for Nepean-Carlton, do not rely on that kind of research from John Williamson.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question?

**Mr Baird:** I say to the Minister of Finance that he was only too happy to have his mug shot with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation at election time.

During Ontario's recent election, Dalton McGuinty looked taxpayers in the eye in millions of homes across Ontario and said, "I won't raise your taxes"—another broken Liberal promise. Just six weeks into your term you announced the biggest tax increase in Ontario's history. You're breaking election promises: You're raising taxes on seniors; you're raising taxes on working families; you're raising taxes on small businesses; you're raising taxes on everyone in Ontario who pays income taxes. That will bring in more than \$4 billion in the full year. But the added benefit of that is that it will bring in \$800 million this fiscal year.

Will you stand in your place and say that you will apply each and every dollar from that tax increase to deliver Ontario a balanced budget? Will you do that?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I want to assure my friend from Nepean-Carleton that I will always look to him for sage advice when his research is sound. But in this instance, his research is just not based in reality. During the election campaign we made it very clear that the province could not afford the corporate tax cuts that that party, when it was in government, had put into legislation. We said that we would repeal those. We said that the province could not afford the private education tax credit and we repealed that measure. We said during the election campaign that the province could not afford a very ill advised and very poorly constructed credit for seniors in the area of property tax. We kept faith with every one of those commitments. I would like my friend from Nepean-Carleton to correct the record and acknowledge that that is the case.

1440

**Mr Baird:** Dalton McGuinty spent millions of dollars, went on TV and looked at every family in the province and said, "I won't raise your taxes." He didn't give an asterisk; he didn't give an exception. He said it millions of times, in millions of homes across this province.

You promised not to raise taxes, you promised to balance the budget, and both of these promises have been broken. The least you could do is apply this \$800 million toward the financial challenges of the government this year. We gave you \$3 billion yesterday. Earlier, I showed you where you could find another \$1 billion. We're

almost 80% on our way to a balanced budget this year. Show us that you're serious about wanting to balance the budget. Show us that you're going to accept your responsibilities and show us you're going to balance the budget this fiscal year.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I have some very bad news for the member from Nepean-Carleton. He says that he provided us \$3 billion yesterday. His cheque bounced. It bounced because of the terrible, despicable financial management of your party when you were in government.

**Mr Baird:** That \$3 billion came right out of your financial plan. David Hall, the man who crunched your numbers, agrees with me and not with you. David Hall agrees with me. Your man who certified and verified your numbers agrees with me and agrees with our party on that \$3 billion.

John Williamson, in today's National Post, and I'm going to say it again: "Pumping up the deficit of a defeated government had become a tiresome trend in Canada, and one that taxpayers no longer accept." Minister, one can only assume that you want to artificially raise the size of Ontario's deficit. When will you accept your responsibilities and take Ontario off this deficit Viagra? Will you do that, Minister?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I'm going to have to—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. Minister?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I am really going to have to reflect on the "deficit Viagra" comment. I can't figure out the analogy, but I'll work on it. But I'm up to answering the question.

Mr Williamson lost a huge amount of credibility when he failed to do the arithmetic that preceded the article you're referring to. But I want to get to the heart of your question. You say, and you're right, that with the tax measures that we introduced and hopefully will pass in this Legislature, we will start to repair the damage done previously. That will bring us in as much as \$800 million—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Hold on a second. That will bring us in about \$800 million this year, which will be applied to this year's deficit. But the shortcomings and the additional expenditures that your party added after the budget may have some impact on the other side. I invite my friend to return to this House tomorrow, when I will discuss these matters more fully in a fall economic statement.

## ONTARIO POWER GENERATION AND HYDRO ONE

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I have two questions, and my first question is for the Acting Premier. During the election, your Premier made an ironclad commitment to keep Ontario's hydro in public hands. He promised, and I quote, "After the election, the new Ontario Liberal government will stop the sell-off of hydro." Period. End of quote.



But today, listening to your energy minister, it seems that the story has already changed. Reporters asked your energy minister today if you're going to sell off our hydro. He said, "We are not ruling anything in or anything out at this point."

Deputy Premier, I think we should have learned from the previous government that while we have problems with our hydroelectricity system, selling it off and deregulating doesn't answer any of those problems; it makes it worse. Will you rule out selling off our hydro system, period?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I'm sure the Minister of Energy has a comment on that question.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I identified today a number of significant problems associated with OPG. I also identified the steps this government is taking to address those problems. The question that you referred to I put in the context of the panel of advisors I have appointed and said that we are not handcuffing them one way or another. It will be the government's decision with respect to the future of energy in this province.

But let me say this: The last five years have been a horrible failure on the energy sector, and the people who are left to pay for it are the very people who really shouldn't have to pay for the mistakes of the previous government. As we move forward, we believe that the public sector and public ownership of our hydro assets is extremely important for the future effective operation and delivery of an adequate, reliable, stable hydro system going forward in the province of Ontario.

**Mr Hampton:** Then will you answer the very simple question? Let me quote again the Premier. This is what the Premier said during the election campaign: "The PC privatization experience has been a disaster. Higher prices, dirtier air and the threat of more blackouts." That's what the Premier said.

Then he promised, "We will not sell any public generating stations or the transmission grid, period.... It's the only way to get the stability we need to create jobs and grow the economy." So I ask you, following on that, one simple question: Will you rule out today—there will be no further privatization of further generation, there will be no privatization of transmission, there will be no privatization, period, of our hydro system? Will you say that?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** We have certainly said we will not privatize the transmission system in the province of Ontario. The government that introduced private power to Ontario was Mr Hampton's government, a government that you were part of. I remember the NUGs.

Now, with respect to private generation of power, let me read to you what the member says in his book on page 18, and allow me to publicly thank him for autographing my copy. "I am not ideologically opposed to private power, any more than I'm opposed to private restaurants, clothing stores or car dealerships."

Is the member suggesting that we not allow the two new plants in Sarnia and Windsor to come on stream,

which will increase the amount of power available to meet our day-to-day demand? Is he suggesting we do that? I think he is suggesting that. That would be a mistake, because those plants are going to provide more power at a reasonable price and help ensure that we get through the cold winter days that the previous government's plan almost caused a catastrophe with.

**1450**

So to the member opposite I suggest this: (1) We will not privatize the transmission system. (2) Hydro and the generation of hydro, those assets which are public at this point, in my view and in our Premier's view remain public. In terms of private generation, for the future going forward, there's certainly room in this government as there was—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you. New question.

**Mr Hampton:** Again to the energy minister: Today you nominated three people who have absolutely no experience with running a hydroelectric system to be a blue-chip panel to tell you about the future of our hydroelectricity system. This is reminiscent of the Conservatives bringing in Bill Farlinger from Bay Street, someone who had no experience running a hydro system, and asking him for advice on how to run the system. Minister, if you want advice on how to run a hydroelectricity system, why don't you bring in somebody who has experience at Hydro Quebec, or someone who has experience at Manitoba Hydro, or someone who has experience at BC Hydro?

**The Speaker:** Question?

**Mr Hampton:** Why are you going down the same road the Conservatives went down, bringing people in from Bay Street who will only tell you what Bay Street wants, who have no experience whatsoever in running a hydroelectricity system? Why are you making the same mistake the Conservatives made only eight years ago?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** The member opposite probably is a little bit confused about what we did this morning. First of all, on the board of directors of OPG I have appointed Jake Epp as the chair. Mr Epp is a former federal energy minister and provided this House and Legislature, I think, with very good advice with respect to what happened at Pickering. I appointed John Manley, the former federal finance minister, and Mr Epp and Peter Godsoe, a distinguished banker with unparalleled commitment to public enterprise in this country, not to the board of the corporation, but to give us recommendations to give to the board for moving forward.

These issues and the financial predicament that OPG is in today, I would submit to the member opposite, require the very type of expertise we've appointed to the advisory panel. I can assure the member, in the days coming you will see appointments to the board of OPG that will certainly exceed the kind of appointments your government made when it was in power. Those appointments will reflect the diversity of knowledge that's needed to effectively govern such an important public corporation.



**Mr Hampton:** This is just getting good. Minister, your own reference points out the lack of foundation to your argument. Mr Manley knows nothing about running a hydro utility. Mr Godsoe knows nothing about energy efficiency or energy conservation. Mr Epp, frankly, knows nothing about those things, either.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Hampton:** You have a hydroelectricity system that is in trouble. As far as I can see, you're simply replicating a Conservative trick. You bring somebody from Bay Street who knows nothing about affordable hydroelectricity, knows nothing about reliable hydroelectricity, knows nothing about environmental sustainability of hydroelectricity, and now you want them to give you advice on how to run the system. Let me tell you the advice you'll get.

**The Speaker:** Question.

**Mr Hampton:** You'll get advice on what Bay Street wants. They will tell you what Bay Street wants. What the people want you to acknowledge is that they want some things out of the hydro system. They want an affordable system, a reliable system, an environmentally sustainable system, and they want a public system. Will you commit to those things?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I would submit that every one of those men knows a heck of a lot more than you'll ever know about hydro and policy in this province.

Let me read just a little something that happened in Ontario in 1993. I quote from Thomas Walkom's book, *Rae Days*. He says that "By early 1993, with Strong still musing about privatizing parts of Hydro, Energy Minister Brian Charlton had become less categorical in his denials. 'We're looking at everything and anything,' Charlton told the *Toronto Star*. 'If you don't consider every option, you are subject to criticism.'"

I have charged this body to look at every option. I would submit to the member opposite, as he makes jokes about a very serious matter that deals with the elements and essence of the economy of this province, that this government and this Premier are moving forward to address a problem that your government failed to address, that that government failed to address after you raised rates 40%. Rates went up 40% under your government. Hydro's debts went up to an unmanageable level.

We are the folks that were sent to fix the problem. We're changing direction. We're going to make the hydroelectric system serve the people of this province and ensure that we have an adequate and reasonably priced supply of electricity going forward into the future.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is for the Minister of Finance with respect to his obligations as Minister of Finance. In the absence of budgetary tricks, what we're looking at in budgeting balances is revenue and spending. We know the commitment by your leader, now the Premier, to a balanced budget and his commit-

ment to hold the line on taxes. We know from the auditor that as of March 31, 2003, there was a \$117-million surplus. So what we're looking at now is this fiscal year.

We now have something better than estimates too: We have the public accounts statements to the end of March 2003 and we have the provincial tax increases that you have brought in, so you must be familiar with them, including the retroactive ones that you've brought in, that you've imposed on the people of Ontario.

Would you agree now, having done your due diligence performing your obligations as Minister of Finance, that the estimated revenues for the province of Ontario now, for the year which will end March 2004, will be in excess of \$70 billion?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I would say to my friend from Whitby-Ajax that if there had been some due diligence in the management of the finances of this province, we would not be in the situation that Erik Peters described for us on October 29.

He asked me to confirm certain revenue numbers for the current fiscal year. I invite my friend to return to this House tomorrow at about 2 o'clock, when I'll be making a comprehensive statement on the state of the economy, including revenue projections. I can simply tell him at this point that the financial challenges that have been served up to us as a result of our victory in the election are substantial indeed, but they are ones we will meet. We will get this province on a strong and sound financial footing.

**Mr Flaherty:** On the revenue side that sounds a lot like a yes, that the revenues now are estimated at in excess of \$70 billion. Now we have to look—or the Minister of Finance should look, if he's doing his job as the Minister of Finance—on the spending side. We have several months to the end of the fiscal year. We have the commitment by his leader, now the Premier, to the people of Ontario that he would balance the budget.

We know the revenues are in excess of \$70 billion. On the spending side now, has the Premier instructed you, Minister of Finance, to exercise spending controls such that the spending of the province in the next several months will match the revenues and we will have a balanced budget in Ontario? What are those spending controls?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** That approach to managing our affairs was soundly rejected by the people of Ontario. I want to tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax that we will not indulge in the slash and burn of 1996: nurses—gone; water inspectors—gone; teachers—gone; welfare recipients—cut them. That's not our style. That's the style that you implemented over the years. It didn't work and we're not going to adopt it.

1500

## WELFARE REFORM

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. The previous Tory government brought in a punitive,



regressive lifetime ban on those convicted of welfare fraud. This policy, in part, led to the death of Kimberly Rogers of Sudbury. Experts have shown that this doesn't help reduce fraud, as the ban is exceedingly severe and punitive.

What steps are we taking to look at this policy and review its implications for welfare recipients across Ontario?

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: That was a completely improper remark and the member should be asked to withdraw it.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. I can hear neither those who are putting the question or answering the question, or those who have made unparliamentary comments. May I ask that we just be a bit quieter so I can hear.

Member from Hamilton East, have you completed your question? Minister.

**Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** I appreciate the question. In fact, the coroner's inquest in this very unfortunate death does indicate and does recommend that the lifetime ban for welfare fraud be eliminated. Regardless of the opposite side's opinion on the matter, the coroner did in fact recommend that that be the case.

Having said all of that, our party campaigned on the notion that this was a very punitive measure and should be withdrawn, and that is what we intend to do.

**Mr Runciman:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You indicated in your response to my point of order that you could not hear the comments. I would ask you to review Hansard and, if you determine the comments were inappropriate, ask for withdrawal from the member.

**The Speaker:** As I said, the noise level during question period is impossible, and it's coming from both sides. I will review the comments, and if it's unparliamentary I will make my comments then.

Supplementary.

**Mr Agostino:** I'm glad the minister has outlined that we're going to review the situation and hopefully change it in a positive way, where we discourage and obviously go after welfare fraud, but do not put regressive lifetime bans on people simply for cheap political opportunism, as the previous government did, and for no purpose at all to help welfare recipients.

Minister, as you're looking at this review, there are many people who are affected by this. Many constituents of mine, individuals who for one reason or another have gotten themselves into difficult situations, should be dealt with, and I understand that. Can you outline to the House a timeline for us in reviewing this policy and the possibility of us bringing forward other options?

**Hon Ms Pupatello:** We are required to make our report on the recommendations of the inquest early in the new year. I think they require that response from government by February, and we intend to do that.

I can tell you that I am working with my colleagues in cabinet, as well as our ministry, to develop a package to

actually improve legislation that was passed. I happened to have the pleasure of travelling while it was being developed, and didn't agree with much of Ontario Works. Those of us who travelled with that bill could see very early on where there would be many problems that don't actually help people who are on the system. What we intend to do is bring forward a package as quickly as we can to actually make the system work, allow people to live with dignity and allow people to get back to work when they can. That's what we intend to do and we're moving quickly on this.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, the people of Ontario are anxiously awaiting two events. The first is the arrival of Santa Claus. They know when that's going to happen. The second is for their new Liberal government in this province to get down to the business of governing. Repeatedly yesterday, I asked a specific question of the Premier, who couldn't answer. He referred it to the minister, who wouldn't answer, and that was very specifically—and it was followed up by the member from Whitby-Ajax today: "Have you been given instructions to in fact balance your budget?"

Interestingly, I read in the National Post today, "Sorbara Expected to Heed TD's Advice and Break Vow to Balance Budget ...". So now I know why you weren't able to answer the question yesterday. You were waiting for instructions from the TD Bank as to whether or not you could do that. Will you confirm for us today that in fact you were waiting for the TD Bank to give you an excuse not to balance the budget?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I should tell you, I am somewhat offended by the preamble to my friend from Oak Ridges's question. I think any reasonable, objective viewer, any reasonable, objective commentator on this Parliament will confirm that we have been the most active, the most aggressive and the most effective and the most thorough in getting down to our mandate so soon after an election. October 2, we were elected; October 23, we were sworn in. Since that time measures on auto insurance, measures on energy, measures in the Ministry of the Attorney General, measures on northern development, measures on tuition, measures on the greenbelt—he jests when he says, "Get down to work."

Now to the substance of his question. I generally reject taking advice from the National Post, notwithstanding that Conrad Black has left his proprietorship. I read with interest what I hear in the National Post and I go about my business. Our commitment to a balanced budget remains firm and strong, and it remains our intention not just to balance budgets—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

**Mr Klees:** I will be very interested to hear the commentary from the journalists who just heard you talk about how you got down to business. You did; you



quickly got down to business to give us the highest single tax rate increase in the history of the province of Ontario. You very quickly got down to work to punish average citizens, low-income earners, with retroactive tax increases. You did get down to the business of doing that. And you got down to the business—quicker than any other administration—of breaking your campaign promises. What we want to know is, when will you get down to the business of actually correcting your mistake of not getting down to business two months ago? Balance the budget and give the people of this province a true gift for Christmas; namely, one promise that you would keep.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Just on the matter of the measures in Bill 2, where we roll back the corporate tax cuts, it's not just our opinion that these measures were absolutely necessary. In fact, Jack Mintz of the C.D. Howe Institute, one of the most respected institutes in all of the nation—or perhaps North America—made it very clear, when we introduced that bill, that Ontario at this point could not afford the Tory tax cuts. You destabilized government. We've gotten down to work aggressively and with a determination that I think has been uncommon in this place, certainly over the course of the past eight years. I am very proud of the work that we've accomplished in the two months we've been here.

**Mr Klees:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is very important. The member has just referred to Jack Mintz of the C.D. Howe Institute. Let me just remind you that I really think retroactive taxation is a very bad idea—Jack Mintz—

**The Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

## NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** My question's to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. In my riding, farmers want to do their part to protect the water supply. They have embraced the idea of nutrient management plans, not only as a way to protect the environment, but as a tool to increase productivity in their businesses. Many farmers have expressed concern about recent changes that were made to put the Ministry of Environment in charge of enforcement under the Nutrient Management Act. Some were under the impression that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food would take the lead in education and approvals. Why has your government made this change?

1510

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** I thank the member from Chatham-Kent for the question. Clean, safe water is our priority. Another priority that we made very clear during the election campaign was that we were going to implement all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. When you read recommendation 11, it's very clear that the Ministry of the Environment should take the lead in dealing with looking after and protecting our water. The Ministry of the Environment is going to assume the responsibility for compliance and enforcement. The nutrient management plans are still going to be approved by the Ministry of

Agriculture and Food. The registry is going to be maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Training and education is still going to be put forward by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

In the area of policy and regulation development, there's going to be joint responsibility between the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

**Mr Hoy:** Farmers in my riding are also concerned that the Ministry of the Environment officials will not understand common farm practices. They wonder if they will have the expertise to determine if an agricultural operation is in compliance with his or her nutrient management plan. They are also concerned that Ministry of the Environment officials will investigate with the intent to lay charges before all the facts are in. Minister, what are you doing to address these concerns?

**Hon Mr Peters:** I can understand that there is some apprehension out there, but the Minister of the Environment and I have had the opportunity to meet with the nutrient management advisory committee, an advisory committee that's going to play a very important role in offering advice to the respective ministries as well.

I want to point out as well that these MOE officials are going to be trained in agricultural practices. Most interesting, many of the individuals who transferred into the Ministry of Agriculture actually came from the Ministry of the Environment, so they're now going back to the Ministry of the Environment. But these are individuals who are going to be trained in agricultural practices.

We're very conscious. The Minister of the Environment and I have both made a commitment to the nutrient management advisory committee and to the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition that we're prepared to work with them, that we're going to be watching very closely as compliance procedures are undertaken. We are going to be watching this extremely closely.

## AUTISM TREATMENT

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a question for the Acting Premier. Minister, during the election, your Premier said, "I believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over age six is unfair and discriminatory." But earlier today, my colleague for Niagara Centre and I were in court listening to your lawyer defend and justify ongoing discrimination against these kids. Today's case involves 11 more families whose autistic children were recently awarded 90 additional days of IBI treatment. Your lawyer was there appealing the court decision which provided even that limited IBI treatment. Minister, your Premier promised to end this discrimination. When is he going to do it?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I know the Attorney General will want to respond to that question.

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** Yes, this government understands



this is an extremely sensitive and important issue. There are two issues that the member has raised. The first is with respect to the treatment of autistic children, and I know the Minister of Children's Services will want to speak to that. The second one is the legal issue.

There are more than half a dozen injunctions and actions before the courts right now. Each one is unique and different. One case, the one that the member speaks of, involves families with children who are currently getting autistic treatment, who are in the program and want to continue in the program. There is also a case where a three-year-old autistic child is outside of the program and wants to get into the program. The court has to determine the case that's in front of the court. What this government wants to do is act in the best interests of all autistic children, not on a case-by-case basis, but all autistic children. We are taking a position in court that will preserve the government's right to do just that.

**Ms Martel:** You see, Minister, your Premier was very clear during the election. He also said, "The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." But in court today your lawyer, on your behalf, was making every argument that he could to deny these children ongoing autism treatment, treatment that they have just recently won. No Ontario family should have to go to court to get medically necessary IBI treatment. No Ontario family should face financial ruin trying to pay for care for their children. Your Premier made very specific promises to these families. When is he going to keep them?

**Hon Mr Bryant:** I think it would be best if the Minister of Children's Services answered that question.

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I thank the member opposite for the question. I know we sat over there, and I know your concern is intentionally good, and I share your concern for all special-needs kids. There are many obstacles right now for not only autistic children but for all special-needs children. One of the obstacles for autistic children is the lack of therapists, because there was a lack of planning for the training of therapists by this government. We are addressing training of therapists for all special-needs children. We are addressing the lack of therapists. We are addressing—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. You asked me to listen carefully. I heard someone make an unparliamentary comment. Would you like to withdraw that?

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** I'd like to tell the member opposite that there are a number of obstacles. I appreciate the question, and I want to assure her we're doing all we can to address the needs of all special-needs children. Part of the problem is lack of therapists. I'm working very hard with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to address this issue as well at that level.

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** My question is to the government House leader. Minister, with your indulgence, I want to read you a quote:

"We will require public hearings for all major legislation.

"The public should be given the opportunity to comment on any legislation of significance....

"Public input is essential to good government. We will ensure that you have the opportunity to offer comment on all major bills."

Every member here knows that we've had the mother of all time allocation motions—three bills rolled into one. Minister, is this just one more broken promise, and are you prepared to follow the comments from your document, on page 8, the Government That Works for You platform? Are you going to honour your promise and commitment to the people of Ontario to listen to the process and the people of Ontario?

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** First of all, as I recall, the member opposite voted in favour of that time allocation motion. As I also recall, we're passing three bills before the end of this week under the programming motion; all have public hearings, all have clause-by-clause.

Your government constantly used time allocation without public hearings, without third reading debate. In the case of the Eves government, virtually every bill this House passed was done under time allocation with no hearings, with no clause-by-clause. So we looked at a new option: programming, which provided hearings, provided clause-by-clause. You agreed to it, and you voted for it. In fact, you moved closure—that member moved closure—barely a week ago, something that we would never want to do.

This government is more progressive. This government is offering new ideas to make the House work better. This government is offering a new direction not only for this House but for this province, and we're undoing the mess that that member helped create.

**Mr O'Toole:** Minister, I have to say to you that Government That Works for You is being demonstrated to the people of Ontario. Yes, in fact, for those listening, I did agree with the programming motion. But for the record, it should be understood, after endless debate, that it obviously was falling on deaf ears.

One further example: Last week, while discussing Bill 2, I moved an amendment which I know touched a nerve. This was the clause amending the section on retroactivity. I spoke passionately, as did Mr Baird. I was convinced that the seals on the other side were going to listen. What did they do? I'm certain the people of Ontario know they voted unanimously to tax retroactively. They didn't even talk against it. They were shackled, they were silenced.

We tried today in Bill 5 to move forward with motions that would bring great relief into the system of auto insurance.



I put to the minister, are you prepared to listen not just to the committee members but to the people of Ontario to make democracy a real place where we can make changes for everyone? That's our intention. What's your intention?

1520

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I think the member has put his finger on something here. Let me tell you, your government consistently used draconian time allocation to cut off debate with no hearings, no third reading debate and no opportunity for the public to participate, including on budget bills, 97% of the time in the last House. You didn't allow for public hearings. You didn't allow for third reading debate. And whose government was it that had the budget at Magna? Whose government was that? And what Speaker of the House and what body of public opinion said that was no way to conduct the affairs of this Legislature? We are changing direction. We are making this House work. You voted for that motion. You moved closure last week. We say shame on you, and shame on your government's record. We're changing it and making this a much better House to do the people's business in every day of the week.

#### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Many of my constituents are employed in the mining industry. As you would know, the population in northern Ontario has been declining. We have an outflow of young people. Many of my constituents are concerned with their own future. I cannot stress enough the economic importance of the mineral sector to our communities and the northern economy in general. The natural resources in the north contribute billions of dollars to Ontario's economy. The sector is an integral part of the province's economic engine. Recognizing the significant role that mining and exploration plays in our province's economy, what are you doing as a minister to make sure this sector flourishes?

**Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** The member is absolutely correct: Mining does play a significant role in Ontario's economy. That's why just last week I attended the Ontario Exploration and Geoscience Symposium, where I reaffirmed our government's commitment to supporting the mineral industry in Ontario to ensure sustainable development. I will be working with my colleague the honourable David Ramsay, the Minister of Natural Resources, who also attended this symposium, to ensure that the needs, interests and concerns of the mineral industry and our other stakeholders are heard.

There are many needs to address to ensure strong growth of the mining sector. While ensuring a strong mineral industry, we must also recognize the need for sustainable development and the interests of the aboriginal communities. Mining in Ontario is a \$5.7-billion industry with 47 mines in operation across the province,

directly employing 17,900 people, with indirect jobs of 73,000. The McGuinty government is committed to ensuring that the mineral industry is given fair play by this government, and we will help it grow even more.

**Mr Brown:** Over the last eight years, northern Ontario has lost over 8,200 jobs and its population has decreased by 4.2%. As you know, unemployment rates in northern Ontario are double those in southern Ontario. Mining is a major employer in northern Ontario and a source of high-skilled, high-paying jobs. If we are to stem the flow of jobs and people from the north, support for mining is important to our plan. What actions have you taken to ensure the future of the mineral sector in northern Ontario?

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** Just last month I was delighted to announce the creation of the Ontario Mineral Industry Cluster Council to help develop and strengthen Ontario's mineral sector.

#### *Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** With the council's hard work, co-chaired by two world leaders, we will do a lot and so will that council. I can't believe what I heard over on the other side, when you say the world leaders will not do a lot. We will help the council ensure that we become a leading competitor in the global economy.

My ministry will also be working with the Ontario Prospectors Association on the Lake Nipigon Region Geoscience Initiative, and will continue to provide support to the Discover Abitibi Initiative, to document the bedrock geology and mineral potential of northern areas, to realize and revitalize local economies and to create jobs. The Dalton McGuinty government is committed to making sure that happens.

#### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** A question to the Minister of Finance. On November 13 you told the Globe and Mail that in the 2002-03 fiscal year the previous government ran a deficit. Your exact language was, "There is not a surplus there. There is a rather small shortfall." Mr Minister, was that a true statement?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I think I corrected the record on that. I wonder where the member for Erie-Lincoln has been. I corrected the record on that within about 36 hours of making that comment.

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate the minister making it clear that he was mistaken. If it was once, I think we could understand that, but the reality is that it's hard to separate the political spin from the real numbers at the Ministry of Finance. The only deficit that really exists is a Dalton McGuinty-Greg Sorbara credibility deficit.

Let me explain. During the campaign, Dalton McGuinty said that he would balance the books. On October 29, 2003, in the Toronto Star, Dalton McGuinty contradicted himself and said that he would balance the books the next fiscal year. In today's National Post, it's reported that the Ontario Liberals may run the deficit for several years.



Mr Minister, you sit next to the Premier. You know the man. Which version of Dalton McGuinty do I believe: the September version, the October version or the December version? How many Dalton McGuinty deficits are we going to see in the province of Ontario?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I tell you, sir, the Dalton McGuinty that I believe in is the man that was elected as leader of this party over six years ago, who turned the party around, who defined a course for the province of Ontario, who brought those proposals to an election campaign and was the beneficiary of a massive amount of support from the people of Ontario.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I tell my friend from Erie-Lincoln, who cannot seem to stop talking while I answer, under that leadership and under those proposals, we are going to repair the severe financial damage he was a part of. He was a minister there. We are going to put this province on a strong financial footing and we are going to bring a quality of public services to Ontario that will make this province shine.

#### CHILD POVERTY

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** My question is for the Minister of Children's Services. I recently received three letters from my constituents in London. One of them I quote: "Let us remember how much we have lost with the past government, and remember also how far we have yet to go." Another one talks about child poverty. It says, "We did little in the past to alleviate this problem." Another one talks about poverty for women. It says, "This will affect the children and also the future of this province." Recently, I received a letter from the Middlesex-London Health Unit. It's a study done by Dr Graham Pollett about the poverty in London which indicated that we have 22% of children in poverty between the ages of zero and seven. Also, we have 9,000 children between the ages of seven and 17 living in poverty. We have always been campaigning that we want to alleviate this problem in this province, and we blame the past government in these circumstances. What's your agenda? What are you willing to do to alleviate this problem?

1530

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I have not had a chance to review the London study. I look forward to receiving that report from you, but it seems to confirm a couple of other studies that have been done in the last few years about child poverty in the province, and in this case, specifically in London.

We have already taken some steps to alleviate poverty. For example, for the first time in eight years there will be an increase in the minimum wage. Also, pregnant women on social assistance will get the nutritional supplements they need. As well, deadbeat parents who fail to support their children will be held to accountability for the first time in years. As well, and you will hear more about this

in the near future, we will have more accessibility to affordable child care so that young families struggling with poverty can get ahead.

**Mr Ramal:** So far, the people of London and also across the province are still waiting for technical steps. I know that not just one ministry can alleviate the problem. Hopefully, you'll be working in conjunction with other ministries and with the government of Dalton McGuinty to alleviate this problem. What immediate steps can they see to alleviate this problem?

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** I share the member's concern for the families in London-Fanshawe and across the province. You're quite right that this is a monumental task. Attacking child poverty isn't something that one ministry can tackle. That is why we will all be working together in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the ministries of education and health care to ensure that children are well taken care of.

I'll give you an example in the health care ministry, which looks at and funds the physical ailments of children, not necessarily looking at the whole child. It's logical for that ministry but not logical for the families. When those specific programs come under the new children's ministry, we will look at the whole child and look at all of the needs. It is a new ministry, it will take time for it to be established, but I want to make sure your constituents know that I am committed to addressing the issues of child poverty in London-Fanshawe, as well as the rest of the province, with my colleagues in the Ministry of Community and Social Services, health care and education.

#### RENT REGULATION

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. You and your government were campaigning last September on a platform of real rent control, but with the caveat that once renters had vacancies above 3%, that may be lifted. We call that the landlord loophole, and it's made tenants really nervous. Your party can't seem to make up its mind, now that in the greater Toronto area vacancy rates are at 3.8%. On September 30, Liberals claimed that the landlord loophole would only apply if vacancy rates were abnormally high. On December 6, the spokesman for your ministry claimed that the landlord loophole would only apply if vacancy rates were over 3% for a long time.

Tenants deserve an answer. You promised them real rent control. Will tenants continue to receive that real rent control, or are you going to have them at the mercy of the landlords now that vacancy rates are at 3.8%?

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** As has been indicated in our platform commitment, as I am indicating here today, we will be starting a consultation process very soon, in the new year, which will include everyone: tenants, tenants' organizations, landlords, people clear across this province, to get a real handle on the rent control situation. We will be dealing with the problem

and we will be dealing with our commitment as set out in our platform.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Let me just say, before members even leave, because I'd like everyone to hear this: I just want to advise the House that work has continued to find the reason for the division bells' having some malfunction in here. Until we can repair them, we will be using other means to call members to the House for any divisions that may arise. I ask members to pay really close attention to the proceedings and to consult their whips about any planned votes.

I want to thank all members. I'm not quite sure if Santa has borrowed the bells or not, but we will do our best to make the proceedings run smoothly. I just want to let you know that. We are continuing to work to fix those bells.

## PETITIONS

### TOBACCO TAX

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition here signed by a number of my constituents and constituents from our neighbouring ridings.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide tobacco products behind a curtain and support a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas history has proven that increases in tobacco taxes cause increases in the underground trade for illegal black-market tobacco whose contents are neither regulated nor inspected; and

"Whereas forcing store owners to hide their tobacco displays unduly punishes both store owners and consumers for the transition of what remains a legal product;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject tobacco tax hikes, reject a smoke-free Ontario and reject a ban on tobacco displays and protect the rights of consumers to purchase a legal, regulated product."

I sign this petition as I agree with it.

### WASTE DISPOSAL

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I have a petition which I support and will sign when I am finished reading it. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the city of Toronto's new and emerging technologies committee is considering advanced thermal technology (ATT), a form of garbage incineration;

"Whereas ATT, like incineration, squanders valuable resources, pollutes the air and water, and creates toxic residues that must be land-filled;

"Whereas ATT releases toxic metals like mercury, lead and cadmium from plastics, paper and other discarded materials;

"Whereas ATT generates dioxins and furans from chlorine and plastics;

"Whereas ATT requires expensive air pollution control devices to attempt to capture some of the extremely toxic emissions;

"Whereas ATT is prohibitively expensive and does not create local jobs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to take garbage incineration in any form off the table as an option; and

"Be it further resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to assist the city of Toronto in meeting its zero waste target by 2010 by providing support and promoting reduction, source separation, reusing, repairing, composting, recycling and the removal of toxins."

I'm sure you would support this petition, Mr Speaker. I will affix my signature.

### PUBLIC HOUSING

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I have signed my name to my petition. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 was passed into law in December 2000 by the previous government; and

"Whereas this act contains many changes that affect existing tenants and new applicants who are concerned about new rules that could lead to a large number of evictions and penalties;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the government to look at the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, and make changes to it, taking into account the opinions of all stakeholders."

I submit that to the House today.

### LANDFILL

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water



source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management"—heaven forbid; "and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I know how hard the member from Simcoe North has worked, so I'm supporting this petition.

1540

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to present a petition supporting choice in education for Ontario parents. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government respected the right of parents to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government passed a law providing parents with a tax credit of up to 50% of tuition to a maximum of \$3,500 when it's fully implemented; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now introduced a bill that will cancel this important credit that provides working-class parents with the ability to send their children to a school of their choice;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To protect the equity in education tax credit and stop the Liberal tax hike bill from becoming law."

In support, I ascribe my signature.

#### LANDFILL

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations

for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I echo that the member for Simcoe North has worked very hard on this, and I support this and affix my name.

#### TUITION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Because of the skyrocketing increases in education, the Canadian Federation of Students keep sending petitions about that subject. It reads as follows:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to put my signature to it.

## WATERLOO-WELLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the residents of Waterloo-Wellington need and deserve excellent roads and highways for their safe travel; and

“Whereas good transportation links are vital to the strength of our local economy, supporting job creation through the efficient delivery of our products to the North American marketplace; and

“Whereas transit services are essential to managing the future growth of our urban communities and have a relatively minimal impact on our natural environment; and

“Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has asked all municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington to provide him with their top transportation priorities for the next five years and beyond, all of them responded, and their recommendations form the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan; and

“Whereas Transportation Minister Frank Klees responded quickly to MPP Ted Arnott’s request for a meeting with the councillors and staff of Waterloo-Wellington’s municipalities, and listened to their recommendations; and

“Whereas the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan contains over 40 recommendations provided to MPP Ted Arnott by municipalities, and there is recurrent support for implementing the corridor study of Highway 7/8 between Kitchener and Stratford, a new four-lane Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph, assistance for Wellington county to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge, a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest, Waterloo region’s light rail transit initiative, OSTAR funding for transportation-related projects, and other projects;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the provincial government support Ted Arnott’s Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, and initiate the necessary studies and/or construction of the projects in it.”

This is signed by a substantial number of my constituents, most of whom reside in Mapleton township.

## LANDFILL

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I appreciate this, especially with the messages being brought today from the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

“Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry

of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

“Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources.”

I’ll be pleased to give this to Katie, and I sign my name as well.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA GESTION RESPONSABLE DES FINANCES

Mr Bradley, on behalf of Mr Sorbara, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility / Projet de loi 2, Loi concernant la gestion responsable des finances.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Minister?

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** You’ve called for debate?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** I will be sharing my time with Mr Duguid, Mr McNeely, and Ms Cansfield—I think that’s what I see here—on our leadoff time.

I’m very pleased to be able to speak to this piece of legislation, which of course does restore fiscal responsibility to the province of Ontario.

During the election campaign there was a choice that was put before the people of Ontario, and that choice was whether people would have their government proceed



with further tax cuts which would rob the people of the province and the government of Ontario acting on behalf of a revenue base that was necessary to carry out all the programs, or whether they would proceed with further tax cuts that had been announced by the previous Conservative government. This was clearly put to the people of Ontario; it was no surprise at all.

During the campaign there was an effort put forward to explain to the people of the province that we could not do, for instance, as President George Bush of the United States is doing at the present time, where he has invoked massive tax cuts. They are now running a huge, unprecedented deficit in the United States.

Many of the states within the United States did the same thing. They, of course, in a time when they felt their economies were booming, decided they were going to engage upon, ideologically speaking, massive tax cuts, and at the same time continue to make some significant expenditures to meet their obligations to their people.

1550

As a result, many of these states are in a very difficult situation today where they are unable to meet their fiscal commitments without making drastic cuts to essential programs. So even in states where purportedly the government is what you would call pro-law and order, we have people being released from prison early simply because of budgetary considerations and not the safety of the public. We don't want to see that happen in the province of Ontario.

The message was clear from people whom I talked to. There were some exceptions, and I accepted that because not everybody votes for one party or another. But it was clearly put out there. If people were looking for the tax cut or the tax credit, as the previous government described it, for private schools, then they had a choice. I'm sure that every one of those people was made aware of what that choice was, and when they went to the ballot box, they knew how they were voting. So today, if they write to us and say, "Why are you taking away this particular provision?" we, of course, know that it was very clear.

The government of the day and the Conservative Party certainly said clearly—and I want to give them their credit for being very clear on that—that they would be continuing with, and perhaps escalating over the years, the tax credit for private schools in this province. The Liberal Party in the election campaign said they would not be proceeding with that and, in fact, that they were going to rescind the tax cuts which had been promised by the government of Ontario. I think some of them were contained in that budget that you will recall yourselves was held in the training centre at Magna corporation.

For the first time, a budget was not held in the chambers or at least in the building of the province of Ontario, but instead at the instigation of—I'm sure not the member for Waterloo-Wellington or, I would suggest the member for Erie-Lincoln, but the whiz kids of the day in the Premier's office and perhaps a couple of other political operatives, who said, "Wouldn't it be clever to

hold this budgetary exercise, present this budget, at Magna corporation?"

I'm going to say, as a political observer, that that was a major turning point in politics in Ontario, that it was symbolic of something happening. Today, I'm sure many of my friends on the other side who smiled this afternoon recognized that that was a significant change in the province of Ontario, brought about by holding the budget in that particular venue instead of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, where there would be appropriate response to it and the people would make their choice.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I suggested a winery.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** The member for Erie-Lincoln suggested a winery. Now that would have been preferable to Magna, but we would still think it should be here in the Legislative Assembly.

So there were a number of tax cuts. There were corporate tax cuts, and I recall the present Premier of the province of Ontario, when he was Leader of the Opposition, going to a dinner which the political parties have for fundraising purposes, and there were among the audience some members of the corporate sector. He said on that occasion that we would be rescinding the corporate tax cuts proposed by the Conservative government of the day. So he was very clear, even to the people who would be, at least on a personal basis—I say "personal" in terms of their corporations—directly affected by it.

In addition to that, the Liberal Party said that the best way of assisting seniors in meeting the costs that they face with their property taxes was in fact the present program under the income tax form, where people who did not have a lot of income were able to have a portion of their tax that would be eligible for a tax credit for those purposes. That continues to exist in the province of Ontario. Those same individuals who are low-income regardless of age, will have that provision. That, I think, was essential.

We recognize as well that there was to be one mortgage deductibility, an American idea. What they never got through to them is that that militates toward favouring the wealthiest people in the province.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** It also leads to capital gains.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** It also leads to capital gains considerations as well, as the member for—I keep wanting to say in Welland-Thorold, but of course it's Fonthill and south St Catharines as well.

**Mr Kormos:** Throw in Port Colborne.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** And Port Colborne, he says, but of course we know that he would be premature in suggesting that, because that would be in the next election. I don't know if he's going to run in the next election or whether he may choose another vocation. I can't presume to speak for him.

I saw in the St Catharines Standard that he said I referred to him as a parliamentary terrorist. I should say, of course, that I only said that to the member himself; not to others. He wore it with a good deal of pride, I must



say. Of course, he is a highly controversial and very active member of the Ontario Legislature. Sometimes he's right and sometimes he isn't right. But we do agree on a number of issues, and I hope that he is pleased with the ultimate resolution of a matter of great contention that has taken place over the last little while. I hope he is in agreement with that and that his party—as I always called it all along, the New Democratic Party—has an opportunity to participate as they should in this House in an appropriate fashion and to have funding to carry out its responsibilities. I think it was a landmark decision that was made today, and one hopes that we will hear more and more of the interventions of the members of the New Democratic Party, previously called independents, who will be in this House, although some of the questions I heard today I wondered about.

I enjoyed his leader's speech last night, but there was a lot of revisionism in it. I must say—I don't think we're allowed to hold these up, are we? I can just make reference to them. I have a book called *Rae Days* and a book called *Giving Away a Miracle*. There's another one called *Public Power*.

**Mr Kormos:** What can you buy them for now?

**Hon Mr Bradley:** They're in the remainder bins now for less than a dollar, but they were hot properties at the time. It was interesting because I was sitting beside—and I'll get back to this bill in a second, I want the member for Niagara Centre to know—the Minister of Energy as he was answering a question. There was an answer something like, "The Premier of the day said all things are to be considered," or somebody in the government. I wondered, where had I heard that before? "All the options were on the table." Of course, where I'd seen it before was in the book called *Rae Days* in the chapter dealing with privatization.

There was a similar statement that was made at that time by a member of the New Democratic Party government. I know the member for Niagara Centre—and you, Mr Speaker—will want me to share this with you. It says, "By early 1993, with Strong"—the then head of Ontario Hydro, Maurice Strong—"still musing about privatizing parts of Hydro, energy minister Brian Charlton had become less categorical in his denials. 'We're looking at everything and anything,' Charlton told the *Toronto Star*. 'If you don't consider every option, you are subject to criticism.'"

That was exactly the answer I heard the Premier of the day or the finance minister or the Minister of Energy say, and I thought I had heard that somewhere before, and yet the leader of the New Democratic Party was quoting things about privatization and there were questions about it. So I thought it would be useful for the public to know that in Tom Walkom's excellent book called *Rae Days: The Rise and Follies of the NDP*—which contains, by the way, many references to the member for then Welland-Thorold and his disagreements with some of the policies of the government of the day. I admire him for disagreeing with it, but I really find it difficult now when his leader gets up in the House and starts talking about

privatization because I know the member for Niagara Centre, formerly Welland-Thorold, must have been beside himself when the government decided that it was going to turn over to a private consortium the construction of Highway 407. I thought that was the first creeping step toward privatization. If I had a glass to the wall of the cabinet room at that time—and you can't do it because the walls are too thick—I'm sure I would have heard—he was out of the cabinet by then, the caucus room—

**Mr Kormos:** We were way out.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** Way out of the cabinet, he says—I would have heard him warning them against this creeping privatization.

1600

**Mr Kormos:** What would I have said?

**Hon Mr Bradley:** He would have said things that were not complimentary of those making the decision; I know that.

But I digress from this bill, which I understand deals with the rescinding of the tax cuts which the Liberal Party, during the election campaign, promised they would rescind.

There's a gentleman in the chair for whom I have a great deal of respect, the member for Waterloo-Wellington. I never put words in people's mouths, but I well recall the wise advice and counsel that he, along with Chris Stockwell, then a good friend of mine, Gary Carr and, I think, Morley Kells—the four of them, I can think of—cautioned, I will say, the Speaker in the chair will correct me if I'm wrong—about the idea of cutting taxes massively before you balance the budget. They didn't say, "Don't cut taxes"; they said, "You've got to balance the budget first."

We're in a situation in Ontario now where the person who looked at all these expenditures, the former Provincial Auditor, just leaving office, came back and said, "You know something, folks? I've looked at the books. You've got a \$5.7-billion deficit, maybe more." Every time we pick up a rock now, we find a financial snake that comes out to bite us. We found out, for instance, in addition to that \$5.7 billion—correct me, somebody, if I'm wrong—I think there were \$800 million in hospital beds. They just told the hospitals, "Get out the charge card and run up a deficit. We'll look after it some way after that." Then the children's aid societies across the province apparently were told the same thing: "Run up the bills. We're not going to give you the money right now, but you can run up the bills."

This government wants to be fiscally responsible. It's interesting. You had an interesting bill in the House the other day that, with a little change of wording, probably would have been unanimous. It didn't quite make it through the House, but I want to commend the member for bringing forward an issue that he brought forward, by the way, when he was in government and opposition—very consistent, as he is prone to be.

I want to say that it's interesting in so many jurisdictions that it's in fact the Liberals or the Democrats



who have brought a sense of fiscal responsibility to the economic setting of their jurisdictions. For instance, Bill Clinton, a Democrat, was the one who balanced the budget in the United States. They always talk about tax-and-spend Democrats. Federally, it was Paul Martin, the Minister of Finance of the day, who balanced the budget there.

Under the Mulroney government, the deficit was completely out of control. I know my friend from Nepean-Carleton—John Baird, as we know him in the Legislature—was a Mulroney staffer, I think, along with another colleague of yours, Jim Wilson. I only say “Jim Wilson” because he’s a member for one of the Simcoe ridings, and he was a Mulroney staffer. They will remember what happens when you allow expenditures to go this way and revenues to go that way. You have to bring those into balance. That’s what this legislation is designed to do. It is not, as the Conservative Party remnants tried to tell us today, a tax increase as such. It is, in fact, a rescinding of those taxes that we said we would not proceed with. I think it’s a responsible stance to take.

Are our corporate taxes now comparable to jurisdictions around? Yes, in fact they’re more favourable at that level in the province of Ontario. There are many people even in the corporate sector who say, “Look, let’s get some of our services back the way they should be. Let’s get our infrastructure restored in this province.” They’re very reasonable about that.

I was surprised that the New Democratic Party members—because I called them that all along; I never called them independents—in this House in fact voted with the government against this bill. In their heart of hearts, if it weren’t for politics, I’m sure that my good friend from Niagara Centre and his colleagues would be voting for this legislation. They were the ones who warned, as well, to give them the credit, “Watch out. You can’t afford all these tax cuts when you have to meet all these spending obligations or investment obligations.”

**Mr Kormos:** There was a \$5-billion deficit. That’s what Gerry Phillips said.

**Hon Mr Bradley:** Gerry Phillips, who was the member for Scarborough-Agincourt at the time, said there was a risk that that would have happened—a risk of that. We really thought, if we were looking at it, and I recall chatting with my colleagues, that probably it was a little over \$2 billion and could be handled by this legislation.

Then we started to pick up the rocks. Every time, as I say, we picked up a rock, out came a financial snake to bite us. As a result, we’re in a position of rescinding these taxes. This is a commitment made.

There are some political advisers to the government caucus—you wouldn’t be aware of this because you’re a neutral Speaker—sorry, to the former government caucus, the Conservative caucus; it’s a hard time when you’ve been on the other side for a long time—and they said, “Why don’t we go to the ones who like us in the media?” That’s the editorial board of the Toronto Sun,

the editorial board of the National Post. Not the reporters who are here; they’re very fair and completely objective. But they went to them and said, “Why don’t we start talking about broken promises?” So that’s all they want to talk about. To their credit, politically, they’ve had some success in the early days.

I think members of the press gallery, who are very objective in the way they view this House, have come to see over the past few weeks so many of these promises being fulfilled at this time. One of them certainly is found in this legislation, which I think makes eminent good sense. This is fiscal responsibility at its best.

The member for Niagara Centre and I have appeared at Ridley College, of all places, to speak to the students, and we’ve had a similar message—I think a more colourful message on the part of my friend from Niagara Centre, because he’s much more colourful than I. We have essentially said the same thing: that you can’t keep giving these tax cuts if you want to meet the social obligations and the infrastructure obligations that governments have. So you have to be fiscally responsible in that sense. In other schools there are going to be a few differences that we would have, but even to those students—and you will remember, Peter, when we were there—he and I both said a similar thing to students of a private school: that we believe in a strong, publicly funded, vibrant education system out there which allows for equality of opportunity for students in the province.

Does that not also mean that you have to be fair and allow people to go to private schools if they want? Certainly you do, but it is the obligation of the government of Ontario to have a strong, publicly funded system. Even some moderates in the Conservative Party, I think, believe that, because in the past I know there have been some strong supporters.

The member for Niagara Centre makes some reference to time allocation motions, and what was nice to see was that we changed that for a change. The House leader of the government went to the House leader of the official opposition and said, “How much time would you like to spend on these bills? Let’s be reasonable about this.” The official opposition House leader said, “We’d like to spend a little more time on this bill, a little less time on that bill.” So together they framed a schedule for it.

I was just wishing by this time that there had been an accommodation made between the government and the third party so they could have participated in that programming motion. Knowing how reasonable and responsible the member for Niagara Centre—formerly the House leader of the New Democratic Party, and maybe House leader again, if that’s allowed—is, I knew he would be reasonable and agree to that motion if given the chance, or a motion—let me be fair; I’ll say “a motion.”

That is my contribution to this. I understand how important this piece of legislation is and I look forward to sharing time with my colleagues I’ve mentioned previously and ultimately to hearing from the opposition parties. I may have to watch on my monitor; I might not be able to be here the whole time, but I will be either reading Hansard or watching the monitor carefully.



**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Tourism and Recreation is sharing his time with some of the other members of the Liberal caucus. I'll recognize the member for Scarborough Centre.

**Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre):** It has been less than 60 days I guess now since we've been sworn into office, and as we're sitting here today I want to take this opportunity, for those of you who are here today—there are likely a couple of more days left in this particular sitting—to wish all of you the best for the holidays. I know it will be a well-earned break when we finally do get that break between Christmas and New Year's. As I look around, I see dark circles under a number of members' eyes, including mine. It has been a long haul. The midnight sittings have taken a lot out of us, but it hasn't reduced our passion. It hasn't reduced our desire to ensure that we do accomplish what we set out to accomplish in this term of office.

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Bill 2 is an important bill for us. It's an essential bill for us and it was right from the beginning, because it's a bill that frees up the resources we're going to require to move on some of the issues that were important to us that we all spoke about during the last election campaign. But given the \$5.6-billion Tory deficit that Erik Peters, the Provincial Auditor, has advised us that we face, this bill is all the more important.

One aspect of the bill that is important is getting rid of the private school tax credit. Public education is this government's priority. Promoting learning and opportunities for children should not be just for the wealthy, or those who can afford it; it has to be all people in our society, all children in our community, all children across this province. Frankly, in my riding of Scarborough Centre—and I admit there are likely children, in fact there are children, who are probably taking advantage of private education. Not all of their parents are rich. Many are well off, but not all of them are rich. Some of them probably aren't. Some of their parents are struggling to put their kids into a private school. But at the same time, they have the option of public education. At a time when our public education system is in deterioration, at a time when we have kids sitting in classrooms of 30 to 40 young people, at a time when we have music classes being jeopardized across the province, when we have outdoor education being questioned and cut back, at a time when some kids, in fact, don't even find soap in their washrooms—I remember speaking during the election at a couple of all-candidates' meetings in high schools. Frankly, they were the most fun all-candidates' meetings, because those young people really were following the issues. That was an issue that was raised time and time again—something simple but something that is really telling, the fact that our schools can't even afford to put soap in their washrooms for their students. It's a small thing but, my goodness, if you can't afford to put soap in your washrooms, what else are they missing? Textbooks for one.

**Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls):** Old textbooks.

**Mr Duguid:** They're using old textbooks, if they have textbooks at all. They have to share. We can do better than that. Our education system has been better than that in the past. We can improve on it and we will, but the money to do that is not going to fall from trees. We're going to have to come forward with tough measures like the bill in front of us today, tough measures that are going to be able to free up dollars to put into public education. At a time when our education system is in that kind of condition, the last thing we can do is take money out of our public education system and put it into our private education system.

Another area in this bill that has been talked about is the seniors' property tax credit. Frankly, let's call it what it is. In my view it was an obvious attempt by the government to buy votes in the last provincial election at the expense of our kids, at the expense of our health care system. I believe, and I think many on this side of the House believe, that it was a reckless thing to do and it was an irresponsible thing to do, considering the financial condition that this province was in—and the government at the time knew about it.

Frankly, seniors never bought into that. They were never sold on this seniors' property tax credit.

**Interjection:** They saw right through it.

**Mr Duguid:** They saw right through it. They recognized it for what it was. It was an attempt to buy their votes. I'm proud of the seniors who I came across in my riding, because I came across very few seniors who complained about this property tax credit, who said—they needed it. Let's face it, the seniors need the money. They would have liked the money, but they didn't want to take it when they knew it would be at the expense of our education system and at the expense of our health care system. They knew what was really going on. They remembered that the government had reduced the standards for nursing care and they didn't like that one bit. The seniors I was talking to, if they were already in the nursing homes, were subjected to those standards. If they weren't, they knew there was a possibility that one day they might be. They were concerned about that.

They were also concerned about the attempts to raise fees for nursing homes. That was a real issue for them, because they want to make sure that nursing care will be there when they need it. The same with health care: Nobody uses the health care system more than our seniors. They rely on it very extensively. They want the security to know that when they go into hospital, whether it's emergency or if they go in for procedures, they're going to get a good quality of care, and they know that that quality of care has been reduced over the years by the previous government. Would they have liked a seniors' property tax credit? Of course. Anybody would like to see more money in their pockets, but they recognized what was being done to provide that extra money. They saw right through this as an attempt to buy their votes, and they rejected it.

I'd like to talk for a few minutes about the tobacco tax. Nobody likes to raise taxes, but raising taxes on tobacco



makes sense at this point in time. It's not an exorbitant increase. In fact, it's only getting it up very close—even at, but close—to the national average. That's a responsible thing to do for two reasons: for social reasons, because we know we want to discourage people from using tobacco, we know it will benefit our health care system to do that and we know it will benefit the individuals who smoke less. But it's also important to make sure that we don't put the tax on tobacco up so that smuggling is increased and we ignite a black market.

This government is proceeding very responsibly, very carefully with these measures. We're not going over the top on these things; we're making sure that we're doing it right. We're making sure that we live up to the commitment we made to the people of Ontario to govern in a responsible way. This bill is an example of that.

There are other measures in this bill as well that make it essential. There are measures that are essential for us to be able to accomplish the things we set out to do. The people on this side of the House didn't set out to bust a Tory budget deficit, but we're going to have to do that. We set out to improve education. We set out to improve health care. We ran to create a new deal for municipalities across this province. We wanted to address the escalating and skyrocketing auto insurance rates. We wanted to return responsible management to the energy file, among a number of other things, but we've been stuck with this challenge of getting this deficit down.

I have to tell you, we're up to that challenge. We're going to meet that challenge because we know we have to. We know we have to provide responsible government. It's not just a fiscal deficit; there are other things as well that have been revealed, and they were revealed through the last auditor's report.

When they talked about public health, they talked about the fact that 14% of our kids were not getting vaccinations. We can't just sit blindly by and let that continue. We've got to take measures to improve that. That's going to require finances. That's going to require resources.

They talked about the fact that 27% of registered waterworks failed minimum tests for E coli. We can't let that go on. We've got to concentrate on that. That's a safety deficit. It may not be a fiscal deficit but it's a safety deficit.

In the area of children's mental health, there's an average wait of one year to help autistic children, to get assistance. We can't allow that to continue. In fact, there are more children on the waiting list than there are actually receiving services. Again, this government won't sit idly by and allow that to happen. But we've got to tackle these fiscal difficulties in order to get to these social problems, in order to try to meet some of those goals.

I talked about a safety deficit. We have the highest backlog in 10 years right now with regard to court cases across the province. There may be some criminals who will go free. They'll be let out in the streets. This is coming from a government that prided itself on being

tough on crime. They've been anything but tough on crime if they allow these criminals to go out on the streets without paying their dispensation.

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** What was Runciman doing?

**Mr Duguid:** I guess they were sleeping at the switch when this was going on.

Mr Speaker, my time is coming to a close, so I thank you for the few minutes to respond to this very important bill. It's not easy, but it's something we're going to have to do. We're going to move forward with this with pride, because we are going to tackle this deficit.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans):** Bill 2 represents a foundation for change in the way we do business in Ontario. It sets the stage for bringing important changes to public education, improving our health care system, strengthening our communities and creating a more prosperous economy. It is also a significant piece of legislation and a large step toward fiscal responsibility in this province.

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This government is committed to a tax system that remains competitive with all the jurisdictions with which we compete around the world. The financial policies of the previous government were unsustainable. Their reckless tax reductions put at risk all of the public services that the people of Ontario expect from government. Our commitment to good stewardship is a good part of the reason this party was elected on October 2. If we're going to provide a high quality of education and make health care sustainable in Ontario, we cannot afford to lower taxes.

Bill 2 repeals the property tax credit for seniors. This legislation was part of a package designed to attract the support of groups of voters who the previous government believed would be completely motivated by self-interest. The truth is that Ontarians are very generous in their belief that we all share the responsibility for high-quality public services, including education and health care. When we all contribute, we all share in the cumulative benefits of excellence in these sectors.

Increasing tobacco taxes in a measured way, as this bill does, has clear health objectives, but also ensures that we do not incite the problem we saw 10 years ago when tobacco taxes were so high that the black market became involved. As it is, we are raising taxes to the national average. I was part of Ottawa's city council and I have to give credit to Mayor Chiarelli; the chair of health, recreation and social services, Alex Munter; and our whole team at the city of Ottawa. We brought in the no-smoking bylaw when people said we couldn't, and it certainly worked. Any measure that will reduce smoking in a measured way is taking us in the right direction in this province.

In the mid-1990s, this province started down a road of disinvestment in education, health, the environment and, worst of all, because reliable low-cost energy is one of the bulwarks of our economy, in energy. We had the



poorly planned, poorly executed upgrades to Pickering. This disinvestment has placed the people of the province in jeopardy. We have inadequate schools, long waiting times for hip and knee operations, long lineups for cancer treatment, the risk of brownouts and blackouts, Walkerton, firing of meat inspectors, tough environmental laws but nobody to do the enforcement, closing of beaches on Lake Huron, and smog days like never before.

Unfortunately, the previous government left us with a structural problem with our revenues in Ontario. That structural problem has to be dealt with, and this bill goes along way to doing that. Irresponsible tax cuts have resulted in program spending growing faster than tax revenues. This is where the \$5.6-billion deficit comes from. We promised to deliver change in this province. We must first deal with the financial problems of this province, which were left to us, but we intend to get on with that. We intend to deal with them and we intend to make sure this province is financially stable and that we are moving in the right direction.

This province faces major infrastructure maintenance costs. Rozanski identified in his report \$2 billion of undone maintenance in our schools. If we look at what our cities are able to do about our highways, that whole lack of support started in the mid-1990s. There's \$2 billion there in lost maintenance that's going to cost us many more billions when we have to do those repairs. They should be done now. Maintenance not carried out is the same as debt. If that roof is leaking, you can't say, "Well, I've got \$3,500 more in my bank account because I don't repair it." That's a debt that you have. If you don't do it, you will live to regret that. We have that lack of investment in this province and it's time that we got on with doing it. That's what this government will do. The accumulation of repairs, investment not done or equivalent debt is in the tens of billions of dollars in this province. We will be paying for that for a long time, but the Liberal government is going to tackle the problems of this province and deliver.

Ontarians are supporting good government. They voted over 50% in my riding for change. They voted to deal with the problems of education, health, energy. My neighbour in Ottawa was in charge of the worst boondoggle ever in this province, the Pickering repairs—poorly planned, poorly executed. That's what we got. We had estimates that were surpassed four times. We're going to have to deal with that, but we will deal with that. We've started to deal with that with the energy bill.

Ontarians are supporting government addressing the deficit in this province. We will get on with the promises in education, health and environment. I was very pleased to see the initiatives of our Minister of the Environment. We have hired 33 new water inspectors. We have hired meat inspectors at the Ministry of Agriculture. We are moving ahead to make sure that we protect Ontario for the next generation. This government has already taken significant steps to put the financial affairs of this province in order, and we'll continue to work hard to do this and to move ahead with measures that the people of this province supported and which we will deliver on.

One of the issues that was very important to me was to see that we are moving ahead with the recommendations of Chief Justice O'Connor in the Walkerton report. The Minister of the Environment will now be dealing with the implementation of the Nutrient Management Act, and the water protection plans will be part of the applications under nutrient management as well. We will protect our water. We will move ahead with the promise of implementing all of the Walkerton report recommendations. I am pleased to be part of this government that is doing that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre):** I'm delighted to be able to speak on Bill 2, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility. It reflects the individuals in Etobicoke whom I represent in my riding, which is extraordinarily diverse, not only socio-economically, but also culturally. As an opportunity, I spoke with seniors—I think I have 26,000 in my riding—many of them, not all of them, obviously, but a significant number of them, along with the different cultural groups, to find out exactly how they feel about the state of affairs that is currently happening here in Ontario.

From the people I spoke with, it definitely came across that they are supportive of responsibility and responsible government. It's an opportunity to come back to the issue of trust. This is the second piece of legislation that this government has put forth, and it's starting to fulfill its commitments. It's starting to tackle something that is extremely important to all of us: It's called the deficit, a \$5.6-billion deficit.

This brings us back to the issue of how we deal with taxation. I think you've heard consistently that the Premier said there would be no personal tax increase.

I think it's also important for us to really look at the responsibilities, or lack of responsibilities, that occurred in the previous government in dealing with some of their issues. We could start with the Corporations Tax Act. We've maintained competitive corporate taxes. We haven't lowered them; we've sustained them. It's still lower than our neighbouring states. It still enables us to be competitive, and it ensures the government's ability to provide, ultimately, quality public services. When you look to those corporations, one of the issues they will tell you first and foremost is that they require a sound education system from which to get skilled workers; that today we're dealing with a new economy where critical thinking, working together as a team, solving problems and not creating them are the hallmarks of any corporation's wish for new employees. That's part of what we teach in our schools.

Businesses, of course, can't function unless there's a good transportation system, energy supply and waste removal. These are essential parts of what is required for good business, large or small, to operate in this province.

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Along with the schools and the training, there are the training centres as well, which are an important and



integral part of what's needed in a well-rounded economy.

So what we've done is we've removed the tax giveaways that actually did nothing to continue to spur corporate growth or even to keep companies in Ontario. There is absolutely no evidence that any of that did occur.

The small businesses in my riding, however, with incomes below \$400,000, still benefit from the lower small business tax, which will stay at 5.5% for the year 2004 and beyond. The entrepreneurs in my riding have been growing and flourishing because of their own initiatives and because of their willingness to tackle such issues as energy and how they too can make their businesses more productive. Now small business can depend on a government as a partner that provides solid public service to support their needs.

As I said earlier, in the personal income tax act the personal income tax rates remain in place; nothing has changed. My constituents understand the difference between the two. My constituents are really concerned about the decline in services.

When I speak to my seniors and I ask them how they wish to have their money spent, they say, "Spend it well. I want a bang for my buck. I want accountability. I don't want you to squander it." That doesn't mean that they want a tax giveback to them; what it does mean is that they want what is being prepared for the different services to be spent well on those services and, in particular, health care and education. If you look at our growing population, health care is their top priority, as we are an aging population.

So the personal tax giveaways really didn't end up in the pockets of those who needed it most, but actually those who needed it least. A good example of that is the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act. The act has been repealed, and with good reason. The act was a plan to reduce the education portion of residential property taxes. What people didn't understand, of course, is that it wasn't going to happen until 2005-plus, that in fact it would be about \$8 a month, maybe \$100 a year, and that it would apply to people over 65 who already can, if it's required, receive a tax rebate of \$1,000.

What did this mean? It really meant that people such as Ted Rogers would get a break of \$23,000 on his \$5.5-million Toronto home. It meant that Ken Thomson and Peter Munk would each pay about \$22,500 less in property tax. Actually, one of our former Lieutenant Governors would be richer by \$15,000 on that particular home, which is estimated at \$3.6 million. The only one who really comes out on the light end, and the pun is intended, is a singer who in fact would only get back \$17,000.

This is money that we could use to replace our schools, to fix our health care system and to put in place much-needed public services. It also means that it could help with what my colleague spoke about before: the backlog. Interestingly enough, the previous government did, not one, but two studies on the state of repair of

schools across this province, because they didn't believe the figure out of the first study. They thought it couldn't be true. But lo and behold, the second study confirmed it, and by the way, the business officials in the schools reaffirmed with their position as well.

Aside from maintenance and repair, I'm talking capital infrastructure. It's \$1 billion in this province for schools. They are crumbling, and they desperately need to be fixed. If you're going to educate people, you must permit your workers, the teachers, the children, the caretakers and the secretaries to at least have a decent workplace and a place in which to learn. That is a critical component of a well-funded education system. It would also help the schools in terms of the backlog—little things like textbooks that have been missing for some time. So that savings of an average of \$475 would go a long way. Certainly my seniors have said they'd rather have a good education system for their grandchildren than have that money in their pocket, because they know that their grandchildren in fact are their future—their future physician, their future lawyer, their future doctor, their future entrepreneur where they can buy their services.

The retail sales tax is another part of the bill that is particularly important. This is the retail sales tax rebate on certain Energy Star-related appliances. It has been extended until March 31, 2004. This is just the beginning of the whole issue around conservation that we need to deal with again if we're going to tackle this deficit. Other measures will be brought out in the new year as we deal with conservation on the energy front. My constituents are telling me that this issue is particularly important to them; that is, how we use and conserve our energy, and the cap.

On the removal of the cap, I have not had anybody say it's been irresponsible; quite the opposite. They have said that this is finally something we needed to do to deal with the issue at hand, and that is, what we use we pay for in terms of electricity.

The tobacco sales tax on cigarettes has been increased from 8.6 cents to 9.85 cents. While everyone who knows the extraordinary cost for health care, dealing with the issue of not only first-hand but second-hand smoke, knows that this has been probably one of the better things that we've done, working with children and youth at risk and with health centres to try to reduce and eliminate the need and the dependency that people have on cigarettes is an important part of our social policy to move forward. Not only do you have a healthier community, you in fact reduce, and you have a good business case for reducing, the costs in your health care system.

I've been privileged over the years to work in my community in a number of areas. I've seen first-hand over the 31 years that I've been in Etobicoke the change in that community in terms of its needs. As you know, the hospice has been particularly important to me. I'll give you a good example of that. Today there are people who die who can't get palliative care beds, either in a respite centre or in a hospital. That didn't happen years ago. That change in our thinking has to occur so we can



provide for the end of life, so people can die with dignity. That's something that's important to all of us and, again, how we think in terms of our social conscience.

I spoke about being involved with the school boards and have seen the decline. When you take \$2 billion out of the system, trust me, it hurts. The problems we've seen now that have been exacerbated by that are our crumbling schools, the lack of textbooks, the lack of librarians—the lack, the lack, the lack; I could go on. The list is long; it's a litany.

It's time to reinvest in that education system, which is a strong component of a good economy. The interesting part, and one that used to frustrate me to no end, is that the previous government would go outside of Canada, put ads on television and say, "Come. Come and invest in this community, because it has a sound educational system." That was at the same time that system was crumbling.

I've been involved with a settlement house as a residential home for homeless families. Think about this: Homeless families just in this city alone—over a thousand homeless families. How about the number of homeless people on the streets? When was the last time you can recall, except in current years, that you heard of somebody who died because they froze to death on the streets in Toronto? What are we about if we're not about looking after those who are less fortunate than we are, to provide a safe haven and support for them? How do we allow this to happen as part of our broader social conscience? It doesn't mean that you can't spend your money well and wisely; it doesn't mean you can't have a strong fiscal commitment. But what it does mean is that you need to look at how you prioritize your dollars and where you put them.

One of the most important components for me has been the cancellation of the private school giveaway, as I call it. It's actually called an equity in education tax credit, and it's an interesting use of the word "equity." The reason I say that is because not for the last 15 years I've been involved in the school system have I seen such extraordinary changes that have been a result of lots of governments that have politicized education to the nth degree, where everybody needs to put this extraordinary stamp on what they've had to do. What they've managed is that every time you turn around, it's another curriculum, another amount of writing, another amount of testing; and yet, have things improved? I think that discussion needs to take place.

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In particular, with the equity in education tax credit, the fascinating thing for me is that when you actually look, first of all, you don't need to have fully qualified teachers and only five children to a school. You don't have to have fully qualified teachers. If you do, you need to check them out criminally. You do not have to have Ontario curriculum. The public school board needs the Ontario curriculum, but private schools don't. Actually, all they need, it says, is the requirement with respect to the length of the instructional program for each school

day as prescribed. So the number of minutes has to be the same; the curriculum doesn't have to be.

It doesn't have to have the same set of standards as you do in the public system. Where are the issues around the Safe Schools Act and the suspensions and expulsions of students, the quasi-judicial issues that had to be dealt with in the schools? They don't have to be tested, not with the Education Quality and Accountability Office anyway. Students in the public system do have to be tested.

Finally, probably the most important component in this bill is that they don't have to accept you if you have a disability, because it's done based on admission, whereas the public system is open and accessible to all, regardless of your ability or disability, your faith, your culture, your creed.

When people talk about an equity in education tax credit, I don't know what in the world they're talking about. There is no equity in that at all, so it was time. In a society where we're looking to bring people together, especially when you consider that over 50% of the students in the secondary just in this city alone do not have English as their first language, and 49% in the elementary do not, you would think you would want to bring people together to help them understand each others' cultures, so the word isn't "tolerate" each other; the word is "understand" each other. Certainly a bill that separates and divides is not one that is going to accomplish it for me. It was probably one of the best things that happened under this tax act.

The other is that we need to talk about how we sustain our relationship with the public as a whole. It's fascinating that that old adage is still out there that there are used-car salespeople, and then I think there are politicians. They're sort of at the bottom of the heap when people ask, "Whom do you trust?" Well, definitely not politicians. You have to ask yourself why, and why has the public become so cynical? Why isn't there faith any more in what people have to say?

They elect people to represent them here in the House, a welcome opportunity for the dialogue, and instead we banter across at each other and nothing much is accomplished, instead of that really good debate as to why people do what they do. You need to restore that faith in why we're here. I think part of that comes from the interaction and dialogue that occur not only here on the floor but also in committees, so that we can go out to people and say we've had that conversation, we've listened to the other side, we've made those amendments where we think it's important because the case has been made. To me that's what this is supposed to be all about. That's the change that I think needs to happen to restore peoples' faith in this system as well as in a lot of our public services.

We're all the brunt of a lot of jokes. I know the people I work with here work extraordinarily hard in the Ministry of Energy, and yet that particular ministry has been decimated in terms of its support services. I think we need to look at how do we retain our fiscal responsi-



bility and at the same time acknowledge and value the people who work with us who will help us make those kinds of changes.

It's time to make a beginning. It's time to start. This is the beginning of the return, I think, of trust in what we say and do. We will get our fiscal house in order first and foremost, and when that is done—and that is the first promise I made when I knocked on a door: responsible government. Don't spend money you don't have, and get your house in order. If what the previous government had done in terms of what I have identified is called fiscal responsibility, I don't want any part of it. I would rather be up front and honest with people about the challenges we face, manage it well and say to them, "Yes, I can do it," or "No, I can't, and when I can, I will." Those are important, honest words to say to people, as opposed to the nonsense.

I think that's what people are looking for in this House and definitely voted for in this government when they put 72 of us here to make that kind of difference. They want their faith restored; they want their faith renewed; they want good, strong fiscal government; they want people who are accountable; and they want people who are going to tell them the truth. The fact of the matter is, whether you like it or you don't, there's a \$5.6-billion deficit that's just been exacerbated by the OPG nonsense. The end of the line is, we have to deal with it and we have to deal with it now.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** You don't believe this.

**Mrs Cansfield:** Actually, I do believe it.

**Interjection:** Yes, she does.

**Mrs Cansfield:** Absolutely, because I've seen it, I've walked it, and I've dealt with it for the last eight years. I can tell you that the changes that have occurred in education alone are horrific in terms of trying to find ways and means to educate young people and deal with their challenges, and we haven't been doing a very good job. As a matter of fact, we've been lying to those children to say they're going to go out to the world and do wonderful things when in fact we haven't been able to fulfill their needs. It's time to make that kind of difference, and I've spent 15 years doing that. The last eight have been particularly difficult, as there hasn't been the leadership. I tell you that the leadership is here now on this side of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

Seeing none, questions and comments?

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I'm pleased to be able to rise today and make a few comments on all the different folks from the Liberals who started the first day of debate on the Bill 2 third reading. You all made some comments, and they were the kind of comments I expected.

I listened today from one of your lob questions to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Honourable Rick Bartolucci. A number of the members talked about the last six or eight years. I had to go back to an editorial I'd seen this week from the Sudbury Star and

its comments about the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In the last four or five years since I've been here, this minister has nagged, complained and whined, and no matter what we did for Sudbury was never good enough. In fact, Highway 69 has had more construction since our government came to power in 1995, including the latest phase which is about 17 kilometres in the Pointe au Baril area, than any other government in history has moved that highway along.

Now the minister is backtracking so quickly on this, and it's actually kind of sad. His constituents already understand the dilemma he's in. He's whined and cried for all this time to get funding from our government, which we've delivered on, including a hospital, and now we need their government, the Liberal government, to come up with the money to finish Highway 69. We are expecting that. The residents of northern Ontario are expecting that, and we expect that to happen with this government very quickly in the next four years. There are only another 100 kilometres to finish.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity and look forward to Mr Baird's comments as well.

1650

**Mr Kormos:** I listened, oh so carefully, to the comments of every single one of the speakers over the course of the last hour. None of them changed my mind. I know they did their best to be persuasive, and I tell you that I was as open-minded as I could be under the circumstances, wanting to hear the arguments. None of them changed my mind. I regret—because I was here and I should have been over in the committee that was dealing with the auto insurance bill, Mr Colle's bill. I dropped in there around a quarter to 4. All the committee members were sitting there waiting for the committee to start. I was very impressed, I should say to you, Mr Colle. It was a distinctively effective job you did in getting the committee members there, having them sitting there patiently waiting for the committee to start. I regret not having been over there in that committee. Instead, I found myself here. That committee's over.

I'm not going to be supporting this legislation—of course not. Look, here's a government that knew, through its own finance critic, Gerry Phillips, now Chair of Management Board—he's the one who predicted a \$5-billion deficit. I was there in the committee. He put a risk of \$5 billion—in the hole. I was there; Howard Hampton was there—\$5 billion. The government knew about it, Liberals knew about it, yet they campaigned on promise after promise as if there were no deficit, knowing full well there was a \$5-billion deficit. Now they're breaking a promise a day since their election. Heck, after Thursday, they'll give themselves a three-month vacation. That's what I expect of the auto insurance committee, to be sitting during those three months that the Liberals are giving themselves a vacation, and we can travel the province. Liberals get a three-month vacation and the consumer gets it in the neck. I guess nothing's really changed around here, has it?

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** I wanted to report to the House that a number of my constituents have been



contacting my office and writing letters in regard to the education tax credit. As you know, my constituency has spoken very strongly against removing the education tax credit. Nonetheless, the Liberal Party made the commitment clear during the last election.

But I wanted to report to the House that we certainly have received a number of people expressing concerns. I just want to put it on record. Again, it's very clear what the Liberal Party position was during the election. It's a matter of recording what I have been receiving in my office.

**Mr Hudak:** I'm pleased to comment on the speeches of my colleagues across the floor. The last comment is rather ironic. I don't know if I would agree that the Liberal position on taxes was clear. In fact, I remember very clearly, and I'm not the only one who was watching TV during the campaign, Dalton McGuinty looking into my TV screen and saying, night after night, "I will not raise your taxes." Now, ironically, we find ourselves today debating a bill that is the biggest tax hike in the history of the province of Ontario, the big Dalton McGuinty tax grab. What he said during the campaign and what he said when he became Premier are entirely different things on issue after issue.

In fact, I was just reading one of my favourite columns in the *St Catharines Standard* by Kalvin Reid, called "Reporter's Notebook," where he discusses how the Liberals promised to bring ambulance dispatch down to Niagara.

**Mr Kormos:** They promised.

**Mr Hudak:** My colleague from Niagara Centre remembers. Imagine that: Niagara Centre agrees with me that they promised that. It says they were told that "a winning bid was selected late in the summer, but it got lost in the shuffle of the election." They expected it shortly after that. "With the new Liberal government now in power, we were told it only required the approval of cabinet." It was all set to go. "Now a different official from the same ministry says it is still in the process of reviewing the bids, not revealing how many bids there are to review."

"The fact of the matter is this is something that should have been settled long ago. Make an announcement, and let's hope that announcement will entail allowing the regional government to operate the dispatch centre."

They're backtracking. They're slamming the brakes on the mid-peninsula corridor; they're backtracking on a promise to bring dispatch down to Niagara; they're backtracking on a pledge to get rid of audits for doctors, another local issue the member for Niagara Centre has been involved with—three big broken promises in a matter of weeks in Niagara alone.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response from the Liberal Party? It has to be one of the members who spoke.

Further debate?

**Mr Kormos:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Liberal speakers are entitled to a two-minute response. There were three of them, as I recall, who spoke. Any one of them is entitled to the two-minute response.

**The Acting Speaker:** Unfortunately, none of the members who spoke is currently in the chamber. I've asked two or three times to see who's going to respond.

**Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm just concerned that we went through debate. One of the things about this debate is that members give their thoughts. I'm not even on House duty; I'm here to listen to the debate. I too had questions. Two of my colleagues in the Conservative caucus had questions. These four members who just spoke—it's like a dine-and-dash. They have debated and then they have departed. Is that in order, or should they be summoned back by you to answer the questions in this House?

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** It has been the tradition in this place over the many years, including those who have not been here, that people's attendance in this place is not referred to. The fact that the members may or may not have pressing situations is beyond this member, and beyond those members. I would highly recommend that we stay with the tradition of this House.

**The Acting Speaker:** The chief government whip is quite correct. It is inappropriate for members to refer to the absence of other members. Notwithstanding that fact, members who speak have an opportunity to respond after questions and comments and the fact is, apparently no one is here to respond.

**Mr Kormos:** On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: No member referred to the absence of any other members. It was the Speaker who referred to the absence of four government members.

**The Acting Speaker:** In response to your point of order.

Further debate?

**Mr Baird:** It's not a privilege for me to stand up and debate this bill. This bill is going to do a lot of damage to working families in Ontario and to employers. We termed this bill the biggest tax increase in Ontario history. That was a bit of a slogan, but we've done the research and the biggest tax increase ever will be this bill brought in by Dalton McGuinty, a \$4.13-billion tax increase.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** "There was a law against that," I think the member for Niagara Centre said.

The previous one—and two of my friends will be interested—was brought in by David Peterson, but even he would blush at this tax increase. Peterson brought in a \$2.8-billion tax grab. Bob Rae, in 1993, brought in a \$2.2-billion tax grab. This tax increase would make even Bob Rae blush.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** "Best Liberal Premier this province ever had," one of my colleagues said.

That's a tremendous concern because what Bob Rae experienced is that when you raise taxes, you bring in less revenue. When you raise taxes on companies there are less jobs here. When there are less jobs there are more people on welfare. That is a tremendous concern because we know that tax cuts create jobs. Ontario has



led the country in job creation. In the last year Ontario has had more job creation than in the entire 50 states combined—the largest number of new jobs created right here in Ontario. We've seen Ontario pull up the rest of the North American economy where it's getting to 8% economic growth, again fuelled by George Bush's tax cuts, which is good news. That's important.

We believe that—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** I know the honourable member is very happy that Saddam Hussein has been caught—one less demon for him to go after—but I am concerned about the consequence that this is going to have on seniors, the tax increase on seniors. There was a measure contained in the budget and passed by this House into law which provided a bit of tax relief to help seniors stay in their own homes. That's gone and that's too bad.

We've seen the provincial income tax reductions. What I was particularly astonished about is that this government, in the legislation, Bill 2—and we discussed this in clause-by-clause in committee—specifically goes after the lowest tax bracket of taxpayers, specifically goes after low-income earners. We said, "Why would you want to raise taxes on low- and modest-income working families in Ontario?" I think it's a disgrace.

1700

So we put forward an amendment. My friends O'Toole and Barrett put forward an amendment saying, "Let's just take the tax cut for the rich away, but let the lowest-income people, the lowest tax bracket, keep that." They bowed their heads in shame, and that amendment was defeated. That clause passed.

Then we said, "OK, what about middle-class taxpayers? They're the ones being squeezed. They work hard. They play by the rules." We brought forward the amendment and we said, "Let's let the middle class keep their tax cut." Nope, no. They specifically had a chance to help, to stand up for low-income and middle-class taxpayers in Ontario and they whacked them, not once, but twice, and that's too bad.

I just think it's wrong to say to someone, when you're making \$22,000 a year, "We're going to raise taxes on you." You had the Minister of Labour come in this House and say he was going to raise the minimum wage. The government's going to make money on that because there will be more money for the chancellor of the exchequer here in Ontario to get.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** I can appreciate the member for North Bay can't get on the speakers list, and I'm sure she's very concerned about that. That's very unfortunate that she can't get on the speakers list.

Corporate taxes: Corporations don't pay taxes; people pay taxes. What happens is, the people who own—

**Mr Kormos:** Paul Martin doesn't pay taxes.

**Mr Baird:** Paul Martin doesn't pay taxes. That's right.

**Mr Kormos:** His corporations don't pay taxes.

**Mr Baird:** That's right. His corporations don't pay taxes. The member opposite is right; I apologize to the member for Niagara Centre. Paul Martin puts up the old flag of Liberia on his ship and he gets a tax break, a 100% tax break. So Paul Martin won't be touched by this bill because Paul Martin takes all of his companies, writes "Canada Steamship Lines" on them and then drags up the Liberian flag as a—

**Mr Kormos:** That's not very Canadian.

**Mr Baird:** Not very Canadian, indeed. What about modest-income people? They can pay more taxes, but Paul Martin doesn't have to.

**Mr Kormos:** And he's rich, I'm told.

**Mr Baird:** And he's rich, as the member for Niagara Centre says. There are many, many, many ships and they put the Liberian flag to, in a way, evade income tax. Why bother with a tax cut for working families when Paul Martin doesn't pay taxes? I think that's disgraceful and I think it's wrong. Thank goodness Jack Layton is out there putting that issue to voters around the province.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Paul Martin does so pay taxes.

**Mr Baird:** Paul Martin doesn't pay any taxes on Canada Steamship Lines. He flies the Liberian—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** "He's so stupid," he says. Boy, the member for Ottawa Centre has a way with words. "He's so stupid," he says. They have a way with words over there, using the word "stupid." He's bitter.

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** What's he bitter about?

**Mr Baird:** I don't know what he's bitter about, I say to the member for Leeds-Grenville. That's a stupid comment. Boy, the Liberals have a way with words. Someone get one of the Liberal staffers out there, get the claw and get that guy out of here.

**Mr Patten:** It's the only place you could lie.

**Mr Baird:** It's the only place in which you could lie. Speaker, the member for Ottawa Centre just said, "This is the only place you can lie." I would ask you to find out if that's in order.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the member for Ottawa Centre wish to withdraw any statement that he's made?

**Mr Patten:** Not really.

**The Acting Speaker:** I didn't hear any statement by him to that effect.

**Mr Baird:** Could you ask him if he said that?

**The Acting Speaker:** Did you say that, member for Ottawa Centre?

**Mr Patten:** Yes. I said this is only place in which people can lie like he just did about certain things that he should know.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd ask the member for Ottawa Centre to withdraw that statement.

**Mr Patten:** I withdraw the statement.

**Mr Baird:** Very classy. Very, very classy, at this yuletide, festive part of the year.

So we see personal income tax and corporate taxes going up. Some corporations, like the ones that fly the



Liberian flag, don't have to pay taxes in Canada, but the rest of them do. I want those people who have shares in General Motors, who have shares in Bell Canada, like a lot of pensioners—their taxes, I guess, will go up on this and they'll have to pay taxes twice. They'll have to pay taxes inside the company and when they get their dividend cheque. I don't think you'll see any millionaire owners forgo any profit. They'll just jack up the price of their good or service to bring in more money to pay for this. We'll all have an effect on that. Whether we go to buy a new car or refrigerator or a new home, the tax cost will be applied directly to those, and I think that's too bad.

I'm also tremendously disappointed with the increase in tobacco taxes. Normally, when you bring in a tobacco tax increase, you do three things: (1) You say, "We're going to put that money toward cancer care, toward cancer treatment"; (2) you provide some assistance to tobacco farmers to help get them on to other work; and (3) you put money into smoking cessation activities. You want to raise taxes on tobacco and bring in less money, because the idea is that people quit smoking. But we know from the Minister of Finance that they're not budgeting on anyone quitting smoking. They're financially counting on just as many people smoking just as much with this tobacco tax increase, and that's too bad. If you're raising tobacco taxes, you should count on less tobacco sales, because you want people to stop; but that's not what this government wants to do. It's a money grab.

I'm glad my friend the Minister of Agriculture is here. I like the Minister of Agriculture and I say to all his other caucus members, would you back this guy up? He needs some help in there. He's fighting for farmers all by himself and he needs a bit of help. So I say to the member for Brant, help this guy out. Tobacco farmers need help. They need assistance to move on to other crops. If you're going to raise tobacco taxes, put the money directly into cancer care. Put the money directly into cancer research. Put the money into smoking cessation activities.

We should take some of the money from this tobacco increase and hire an extra security guard to keep the member for Don Valley East out of the Tory offices, from smoking. That's what we should do. That would be something that would help people at Queen's Park, if we could keep David Caplan from smoking in the Tory offices next door here. We could hire an extra security guard to ensure the health and safety of members of our staff here at Queen's Park and to protect them from the member for Don Valley East. The whip agrees with me, I know. That's why he's smiling. He agrees with me. He knows that's shameful. Anyway, I think that's unfortunate.

I do find it unfortunate that the equity in education tax credit is going. We live in a multicultural society. For many families, having their children attend a religious school is something that's pretty important to them. Religious values are important to them, and many of them get that religious education in a publicly funded school system, because the Canada of 1867, when

women couldn't vote, when property owners were the only ones who could vote, when this Constitution Act was put into force—we take that standard and apply it to the Canada of today. I don't think Canada had a large Muslim community in the 1800s. I don't think Canada had a large Jewish community in the 1800s. If they did, they certainly didn't enjoy the rights and privileges that everyone else in this country has. I think we've got to look at reality and look at how the face of Canada has changed.

I represent in my community, Nepean-Carleton, a significant Muslim community, a significant Jewish community, many of whom wanted just to have the same rights and privileges that Roman Catholics had. This was a small step toward that, and I think it's disappointing. I agree with Monte Kwinter, I agree with the Attorney General when they say that it's fair and reasonable. I applaud Monte Kwinter for having the courage of his convictions and the guts and the stamina to stand up to his party. It's not easy. I genuinely admire that. He could be an example to members of the opposition and the government, for people to stand up and fight for their constituents.

**1710**

I see this will have a huge effect on families in Nepean-Carleton. In my riding we have the Metcalfe Community Christian School. It's about 60 kids. The parents go in on the weekends and do the janitorial work because they can't afford to hire a janitor. When they need a new roof, they get a bunch of the parents together on a Saturday and put on the roof. There is a huge amount of community support for this. It's something that's incredibly important.

I think of the Holy Redeemer high school. I see Jim Flaherty here. Jim Flaherty came, as the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, and visited Holy Redeemer in Nepean, and spoke to some of the parents there, and the staff who operate the school.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** Middle-class parents.

**Mr Baird:** There are middle-class parents who send their kids to Holy Redeemer. Again, they do a phenomenal job. Holy Redeemer had the highest test scores in Ottawa-Carleton. They obviously do something there that they're not doing anywhere else, and we're cutting them off at the knees.

I think of École Maimonides. It's a Jewish school run by a number of rabbis in Nepean, Rabbi Blum among them. Unfortunately, the students at that school, a lot of them in south Nepean, won't be able to get the credit.

I think of Hillel Academy, another Jewish school in Ottawa that does a phenomenal job in providing education in a parochial environment for the Jewish community. We don't have a big Jewish community in Ottawa. We have about 12,000 or 14,000 or 15,000 members of the Jewish community, but it is tremendously dynamic. The amount of funds they've been able to raise for support services for the entire community has been phenomenal. The new Jewish community centre on its



campus is a living example of what should be done by us all. They have an agency for people with developmental disabilities right on that campus. They can use the community centre; they can use the synagogue at the Jewish long-term-care centre that was opened a few years ago. They have the Hillel Academy on the campus and the students can volunteer, both at the seniors' home and the Tamir Foundation, which deals with people with developmental disabilities. Only half of them are even Jewish, and they can live in a culturally sensitive environment. There are many non-Jews who live and reside there who equally enjoy the Tamir Foundation. We're very proud of that. This is going to affect a lot of parents who send their kids to Hillel Academy.

I think the thing that is of most concern to me and to many members in this House is the retroactive nature of this cut. When they go after businesses, are they doing it retroactively? No. When they go after personal income taxpayers, are they going after them retroactively? No. But there are thousands of parents across Ontario who are depending on this tax credit this year. People say, "No one has ever received it." Many of them had gone into their place of employment and had their withdrawals changed and accounted for these extra funds. These are a lot of working families where you think, "A few hundred dollars, \$1,400, is it a big deal? Well, it's not that big a deal." But it's the last \$1,400 they have. Once they've paid their rent, once they've paid their taxes, once they've paid for food, once they've helped raise the kids, once they've given to charity, it's the last \$1,400 they have. This retroactive provision is going to give a lot of hardship to these families.

It's not just the Conservatives. It's not just Jim Flaherty or Ernie Eves or Bob Runciman or John Baird who are saying this. Let's look at what some are saying.

"Let me remind you that I really think retroactive taxation is a very bad idea on the tax system. It undermines confidence and it undermines trust, and that's something you just don't do." That's Jack Mintz, the president and CEO of the C.D. Howe Institute.

Simon Rosenblum, the director of public policy for the Canadian Jewish Congress, says, "Without prejudice to the larger issue surrounding the tax credit, to cancel it in such a retroactive manner seems to us most unfair and mean-spirited." This is a senior official with the Canadian Jewish Congress calling this government's actions mean-spirited.

I see some of the members over there with a big smile on their face, and I think that's unfortunate.

Bernie Farber, the executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, someone I have a tremendous amount of respect for, says, "... even though we knew that the Premier was going to remove the tax credit, it was still a slap in the face, but to do so retroactively was like a bully punching us in the stomach." I've met Mr Farber many times. He's a man who chooses his words carefully and he's obviously tremendously concerned.

I look at Toni Silberman, the chair of the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada. He calls the message "unjustifiably punitive."

**Hon Mr Kwinter:** She's a woman.

**Mr Baird:** A woman. I apologize. Thank you very much, I say to my friend Mr Kwinter. She finds it unjustifiably punitive. These are well-respected people who deal with human rights issues and make tremendous contributions in Ontario.

But it's not just the Jewish community. Muhammad Khalid, the education director of the Islamic Society of North America, said, "This is going to create mistrust of governments, and it's extremely unjust. The Premier has decided to fulfill his election promise on the backs of the parents of modest means." Again, I think it's unfortunate for the Muslim community in this province.

I look at John Vanasselt, the director of communications for the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools: "I know for a fact that for a number of low-income, including single-parent families, the retroactivity will cause them great pain." I would think it's tremendously demoralizing. Unbelievable.

Let's look at what the principal advocate for small business is saying: "The principle of rolling back anything retroactively is worrisome. If it can happen in one area, it can happen in any area." That's Judith Andrew, the well-respected Ontario vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

I'm tremendously concerned and I was tremendously disappointed at the finance committee. I thought the presenters made a very powerful case on this issue. The government was going to get 99% of what it wanted. Mr Runciman worked hard to secure public hearings on this bill and we were told that they'd be real and meaningful. But at the end of the day, when we moved an amendment to just change it from a three to a four, one single number, the answer was no.

There wasn't even a single member of the committee who had the guts to stand up and speak to the issue, to say why they thought retroactivity was a good thing. That included the parliamentary assistant. No members of the committee could look me in the eye or in the eyes of Mr O'Toole, who made that amendment. I think that is a real problem; I think it's a real disgrace. It shows that these committee hearings were a sham. We saw that in another instance, when the government House leader announced in the House, before the committee had even met, "We're not accepting these amendments. No way." What a message that sends out to the Liberal backbenchers. The minister, right in the House, doesn't even care to let you listen to the amendments, let alone debate them. He announced, "It's over." No, the government would not accept amendment. What a sham these public hearings turned out to be. I think it is a tremendous mistake the government has made.

I've asked three or four questions on this issue in this House. The first time I asked a question I felt so strongly—I didn't want to be partisan—that I went and gave the Premier notice that I was going to ask him a question. I said, "Premier, I'm not trying to put you on the spot here. I'm not trying to score political points. I'm trying to stand up and protect these families"—many in



Nepean-Carlton, in the Niagara Peninsula, in eastern Ontario, in southwestern Ontario and central Ontario, people who work hard and are tremendously concerned about this retroactivity. I know my colleague Mr Runciman is going to be speaking, and Mr Hudak. I'll be splitting my time with them, so I'll be ending very soon.

**Mr Runciman:** Mr Flaherty.

**Mr Baird:** Mr Flaherty. I apologize. I'll end very soon.

I think it's regrettable, particularly in that one instance, when this House could have stood up and said, "You know what? You're going to get 99% of what you want. We listened to the public hearings." I would have applauded for it. Mr O'Toole even agreed to withdraw a series of other amendments to show some good faith. I think that's regrettable.

Again I want to quote, and then I'm going to conclude my remarks and sit down. When Bernie Farber, the executive director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, says that this policy is "like a bully punching us in the stomach," that should be cause for all of us to pause, reflect on it and reverse this regressive policy. I know New Democrats would likely agree to send this back to committee very quickly to address the dispute. Even New Democrats, who fought harder than anyone against this tax credit, said that they disagreed with the retroactivity, when Mr Prue spoke. I think that speaks volumes on this issue.

I look forward to hearing the comments of my colleagues Mr Runciman and Mr Flaherty.

1720

**The Acting Speaker:** I wish to remind all members of the House that when you're referring to another member, you should refer to him or her by the riding name or the ministry name.

**Mr Runciman:** If I haven't done so, I want to congratulate you on your elevation to that historic chair. I know you'll do a good job for every member in this assembly.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate my seatmate, the member for Nepean-Carleton—that's why we don't use the riding names, Mr Speaker. We stumble over them, if we can remember them at all. He's taken on a very huge file, and I think, in terms of getting up to speed in a very short period of time, has done an outstanding job. I say that not just in terms of our party dealing with the financial challenges that the government puts forward, but I think it is very important that you have effective opposition, if you're in government, that understands the implications, the pros and cons of legislation and initiatives that are being brought forward by the government of the day. I think he's doing an exceptional job. I know sometimes the government members don't appreciate the quality of the job he's doing because he is being such an effective critic, but I think at the end of the day it's to the benefit of all of us and the residents of this province. To the member for Nepean-Carleton, thank you.

I want to talk about a couple things, certainly the bill, Mr Speaker. I'll try to make certain that I'm making reference to the legislation under discussion here this evening. It's been mentioned on a number of occasions that this is the largest tax hike in Ontario's history, and I think we should never forget that when we're discussing this and discussing the implications. We've heard from across the floor, "Well, this is the reality of October 2." I understand that. I share that view to some degree with respect to the results of the election. Much of what the government is doing with respect to rollbacks is and has been part of their election platform and they're keeping those commitments. My friend has referenced the retroactive provisions that certainly were not referenced in the platform and are very painful, and we think unfortunate, to say the least, with respect to the impact on so many citizens across this province.

One of things I wanted to comment on, though, with respect to the realities of October 2 is the speedy onset of arrogance in the government benches. Certainly on this issue we've heard it on occasion after occasion. I know when my colleague was asking a question of the Ministry of Citizenship—I think it was earlier this week—with respect to her responsibilities to advocate on behalf of various minorities around the cabinet table, part of her response was, "Well the minority communities must be happy. They voted for us. We're the government." I think that reflects badly on the government, and those members who served in the previous Liberal government, from 1985 to 1990, would do well to reflect on their downfall after five short years in government. I think a good part of the reason they fell in terms of public esteem was the arrogance that was personified not just in the front benches but throughout their ranks. Here, in the very early days of this Liberal government we're already seeing signs of that sprinkled throughout their ranks. I think that's unfortunate, and it's certainly offensive to those of us on this side of the House. Eventually it's going to sink in to average Joe and Jane Citizen, who pay their taxes and in many cases voted for change, and certainly didn't expect to get change that would look down on them and on the representatives of the people of this province. Hopefully that's not what's going to happen.

Having been around this House for going on 23 years, I remember well the previous Liberal government, and relating this to the legislation and the ongoing effort of the Liberal government to demonize the former Conservative government with respect to the deficit numbers, I was looking back at some of my old papers when I was moving offices and came upon a piece from the Kingston Whig-Standard in 1990, during the election campaign. Ken Keyes was the Liberal incumbent—a good fellow, Ken—and one of his key platform planks in his efforts to get re-elected in 1990 was, "We have balanced the budget." The Liberal government finally balanced the budget in 1990, after significant economic growth.

As we all know, not only did Mr Keyes lose the election, for a variety of reasons, the government was lost,



and I've mentioned one of them, but also we found, and certainly the incoming NDP government found, that there was no such thing as a Liberal balanced budget. In fact, they were facing a deficit, claimed at the time and confirmed later, of \$3.6 billion. Regrettably, the government at that time made a decision, a very unfortunate decision, that they were going to spend their way out of an economic downturn and we know what that resulted in: some four and a half successive years of \$10-billion-plus deficits and a doubling of the provincial debt during the term they were in office.

We have to look at some comparisons because we're already seeing early signs that this government in, what is it, seven or eight weeks in office—

**Interjection:** More arrogance.

**Mr Runciman:** In terms of arrogance, but I think there are other signs in terms of what they're doing in trying to demonize the former government, but also what they're doing with respect to taxes. If you look back over the five previous years of Liberal government, they increased taxes either 32 or 33 times. I think you will remember this very well, Mr Speaker.

What they did, between the Liberals and the NDP, in increasing welfare rates during a booming economy, put our welfare rates well above the national average, and we ended up with over a million people on welfare, mushrooming welfare rolls, as a result of the programs instituted by the former Liberal government. They came very close to doubling provincial spending during five years in office, almost doubling provincial spending. Of course, they increased dramatically the staffing complement in the public service. We're already seeing those early signs that there's no willpower there to control public spending, no willpower whatsoever. We're already seeing announcement after announcement of increased staffing. We're throwing money here, increased staffing there, increased staffing over here. I do not believe there's a real plan here. It's simply throwing money, throwing money, throwing money, not trying to come to grips with the fiscal challenges of the current year, but instead demonizing the former government, portraying the current deficit challenges as something they cannot come to grips with; in fact, I think, painting a portrait for the Ontario public that is far from accurate.

I think we're already starting to see some implications of this. I hope this is not a harbinger of things to come but it could well be. With the job creation numbers for the first month of this government being in office, there were 7,000 lost jobs during the month of November. That's when we saw unemployment numbers drop across the country. At the same time, we saw a net loss of 7,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. That certainly should be a concern when we're talking about massive tax increases, a record tax increase under this legislation that we're discussing here this evening, especially the implications for small and medium-sized businesses, when you take a look at the corporate tax rollback, and you take a look at things like the minimum wage increases being proposed and being initiated by this government.

There is a whole range of issues here that should concern all of us. It's certainly not conducive to attracting investment or creating jobs. When you look at the record of the former Conservative government, which has certainly been demonized by the folks across the way, we came into government in 1995 facing a situation where the government of the day was spending \$1.1 million an hour more than it was taking in in revenues, a deficit projected to be in the neighbourhood of \$11.3 billion or \$11.5 billion, a truly crisis situation which we immediately came to grips with.

1730

We hear often from the folks across the way, "We're rolling up our sleeves and getting to work." But what are they getting to work doing? They're getting to work spending, they're getting to work hiring more and more public servants, but are they coming to grips with the fiscal challenges? There doesn't seem to be any real intent or any real desire to do that or any real plan of action with respect to how to deal with this.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I apologize to the member. I'm having difficulty hearing the member and it's important that I hear him. I would ask all members to respect that.

**Mr Runciman:** Instead, they have opted to adopt a political plan rather than a meaningful plan to deal with the challenges, a political plan to demonize the former government. But that's only one aspect of their plan in terms of the \$5.6-billion supposed or projected deficit that Mr Peters talked about.

The other plan is a political one and we see it here day in and day out. No matter what government member gets up to speak, whether it's a minister responding to a lob-ball question or a minister responding to the opposition or a minister getting up and making a statement introducing legislation, there's always the inclusion of an effort to play the blame game. For anything that they're failing to do, whether it's this litany of broken promises or whatever it might be, they're utilizing the former government as a whipping boy, as a justification for what they're doing or not doing.

We heard it today in question period when a member from the third party referenced the commitment by the Premier with respect to autistic children. There was a letter dated, I understand, 10 days before the election making some pretty significant commitments with respect to how they would deal with that situation. We heard the minister responsible for children today blaming the former government for the fact that they're not meeting that commitment. This is a letter written 10 days before the election, when the Fraser Institute had indicated the size of the deficit, when the finance and economic affairs committee had met earlier that year and the now Chair of Management Board had indicated that there was a possibility that we'd be facing a projected \$5-billion deficit. The leader of the Liberal Party had indicated that they felt there was at least a \$2-billion challenge there, yet he made those promises 10 days before the election.



Now in this House—what's the date today, December 18, 19, 20?—we have the government minister standing up and blaming the fact that they're not meeting that promise on the former government. That's the tone of the rhetoric in this House coming from the government benches. It's truly unfortunate. I think there's a Warren Kinsella behind the curtains here writing notes for everyone. This seems to be the motivation. They're not really coming to grips with the challenges. I think when people voted for change, they voted for real change, not this sort of approach that we're hearing and seeing from the current government.

There's no question, they are in a honeymoon period and it's difficult sometimes for us to get our messages through that honeymoon veil, but we're going to continue to persist. We're going to continue to make sure, as best we can, that Ontarians are aware of the strategies being utilized here and the very early failings of this government not only to meet their promises, which is certainly significant and I think demoralizing to a lot of people who care about politics, not just in Ontario, but in Canada; but more importantly, certainly in the short and long term, is there willingness to come to grips with the financial situation and find ways to balance the budget and keep their promises? We think it can be done.

I want to quote from a couple of things, and this one I think is interesting. In fact, it comes from Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge. It's called the Record. Mr Speaker, you will be interested in this. It's written by a gentleman by the name of Bruce Whitestone, who is an economist. I believe you know the gentleman fairly well. He ran in a previous provincial election for the Liberal Party of Ontario. Now he's submitting a column on behalf of the Record.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Runciman:** No, he ran against Mr Arnott, as a matter of fact, the man sitting in the chair. He's still here.

He's talking about an article in the Financial Post, which indicates that "for every percentage point growth in the province's GDP, the net benefit to Ontario's budget is \$620 million under the present tax regime." Talking about the Bank of Canada's revised projections for economic growth, he said, "If Ontario's economy can match the national average, that would entail an extra \$2 billion to Ontario's treasury next year, or about \$1 billion for" this fiscal year.

Talking about Mr Peters's report, Mr Peters "completely ignored the probability that the federal government would make a contribution to health funding." We've seen that increase. We've seen it in terms of the health care transfers, we've seen it in terms of SARS relief. We already know that the former government had instituted a hiring freeze, along with other savings, which is going to reap a saving in the neighbourhood of \$800 million.

We also know that Mr Peters, when he utilized the \$5.6-billion figure, added in Hydro's debt numbers. "This is a" historic "departure from past provincial governments of all stripes." This has never happened.

"Hydro accounts have always been kept separate from the provincial government's books. Hydro ratepayers have always been on the hook for Hydro debt, not taxpayers." There's no reason for Mr Peters, as experienced an auditor as he is, to include those numbers as part of that projected deficit, "except to inflate the total for obvious reasons." That's the conclusion reached by Bruce Whitestone, a former Liberal candidate.

I think there's a growing sense that there is a very deliberate effort on the part of the Liberal government to inflate these numbers, to use them not only to demonize the former government, to justify this long and growing list of broken promises, but also to give them an opportunity to spend into that number. I think we're going to hear tomorrow that the Minister of Finance is even going to inflate that number to a more significant extent. I don't think there's any doubt about it. He's going to throw everything but the kitchen sink into this, numbers and figures that have never been calculated as part of the provincial deficit. He's going to try and continue this con game, this shell game that we are at a significant deficit. Then he's going to, through their various unlimited spending patterns, spend into that number until, at the end of the day, he will indeed have reached a \$7-billion, \$8-billion or \$9-billion deficit. Who knows what number he's going to come in with tomorrow? Certainly, and regrettably, I don't believe there's any question that is going to be the strategy.

The member from Nepean-Carleton talked about the efforts of the committee on finance and economic affairs to try to bring meaningful amendments forward with respect to the tax bill, and the fact that they were rebuffed out of hand. The members of the committee had their marching orders and, in fact, from the feedback I've received from members of that committee, were effectively hanging their heads when amendments were brought forward and comments were brought forward with respect to retroactivity and the very negative, draconian measure brought forward by the Liberal government with respect to tax legislation.

1740

That's a clear indication that the rhetoric we've heard from the government, with respect to dealing with democratic reform in this place, is nothing more than rhetoric. There are going to be a number of surface changes, artificial changes. The government, the Liberal Party, will go out and toot their horn about real reform, but we know that's not going to happen.

I strongly believe in improving the operations of this House. We've tried to work with the government House leader to make that happen, but we've seen some of the results so far under this pilot, which are certainly not very encouraging: the programming motion and the failure of the government to meet quorum at the finance committee yesterday in dealing with the auto insurance legislation where people who appeared here—the Insurance Bureau of Canada was one. These are people who set time away from their busy schedules to offer meaningful input into this legislation. The government, with this huge major-



ity—it's unbelievable. What is it, 72 members? They could not have people in that committee to meet quorum so that these people could have input, involve themselves in questions and answers from the various members of the committee. That simply didn't happen. It's unheard of in the last, I think, 10 years or so. I can't recall. Maybe it never happened, where the government, especially—it may be understandable in a minority situation. You can understand it in a minority situation. But here we have a huge majority government situation. The first four weeks of the government in session, with a lot of enthusiastic members—and they fail to meet quorum. They had time to meet quorum and still failed to do so. I guess it does raise questions about whether or not this was a deliberate effort to exclude these people who spent time to come here and make a contribution to this exercise. That raises alarming prospects. I certainly hope that is not the case, but it certainly, I think, demands an answer.

We obviously got an apology here today, but I think we require more than that when we look forward with respect to conducting committee business in this House. If the government of the day adopts a strategy of refusing to provide quorum, what's going to happen? I ask the question: What's going to happen in those kinds of situations?

We're talking about democratic reform here, and I think if the government is going to do more than pay lip service to democratic reform, they have to make they meet their commitments on a regular basis. That certainly didn't happen yesterday. So I think that's a concern.

An earlier concern was the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the government agencies committee by the government. Again, this is unheard of, unprecedented in parliamentary governments that have review processes in place of government appointments. It's unheard of that a government member will be sitting as chair of a committee reviewing government appointments. It certainly raises the whole spectre of an unfair system being in place and the fact that there will not be any objective review of the quality of the individuals who are being appointed by the government and the fairness of the appointments process put in place.

That is a range of issues. I'd better sit down. My colleague wants to make a contribution to this as well, but I think it's an unfortunate situation that we find ourselves in. Our party certainly wanted to play a productive role here, and I think we made that effort through the committee process and were rebuffed at every turn. It's not a good sign of things to come, but I can tell you that this is going to be the most effective opposition that has served in this place for the past eight and a half years. We'll keep this government's toes on fire and make sure that they do the right thing for the people of this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize the member for Whitby-Ajax.

**Mr Flaherty:** Thank you, Speaker, and a fine Speaker you are. It's good to see you here.

I have a few minutes in which I'd like to speak about Bill 2. This is a tax hike bill in Ontario.

Before I get into the bill itself, if I may, I want to talk a bit about people's expectations of government, especially a new government, and this first substantive bill, this Bill 2. People's belief in the political process certainly has been challenged in the past number of years, particularly with respect to politicians who make promises. We had a Premier, Mike Harris in Ontario, with whom many disagreed on this issue or that issue, but there was no question, when he made a commitment, that the commitment would be kept. He did what he said he would do.

Now we have a Premier who, as a candidate—and this is the whopper promise from the Web site of the Liberal Party of Ontario during the election campaign; it may still be there—where the leader, now the Premier, says: "Ontario workers and their families already pay enough. We will hold the line on your taxes." That's so good. First substantive bill, Bill 2: tax hikes for small business, tax hikes for older people in this province, tax hikes for working-class and middle-class parents who choose to send their children to independent schools. There's a promise for you from the new Premier of Ontario ripped in two, destroyed right away within his first two months in office.

Then we have the Minister of Finance today in the Legislature, the minister in whose name this Bill 2 stands, this tax hike bill, who when asked, "Is the revenue prediction, the estimate for the current fiscal year 2003-04, which runs until the end of March 31, 2004, now in excess of \$70 billion?"—a good question; I asked him the question. Why ask the question? Because we now have public accounts for the last fiscal year. We know now exactly what the revenues of the province were for the past fiscal year. Mr Peters didn't have that several weeks ago when, at the request of this government of the day, he looked at the books. So now we have some accurate figures. We also have some federal government figures. We know the tax bite that this government is taking out. So he knows that revenue figure from this bill too.

The Minister of Finance did not answer that question. He knows. I was the Minister of Finance. I know what he's being told by his deputy minister, by the assistant deputy ministers, by the staff over there. I know they track the revenues. The people of the province know that. They expect that from a competent, credible Minister of Finance. They don't expect accounting tricks, they don't expect budgeting tricks; what they expect is a straight answer about what the anticipated revenues are for Ontario from now until the end of the fiscal year.

**Mr Patten:** You didn't do it.

**Mr Flaherty:** The member for Ottawa says I didn't do it. I was very pleased not only to balance the budget in the year I did the budget, but to make the largest payment ever in the history of the Ontario public debt, a reduction of our public debt by in excess of \$3 billion in one year, and that was in a year in which we had relatively modest economic growth in the province.

Here we have a Premier who starts off with a whopper promise that he breaks immediately with Bill 2, and now



a Minister of Finance who will not level with the people of Ontario about what the revenue projection is. If you're not going to level about the revenue projection, just imagine what you're going to do on the spending side. On the spending side I asked the minister today, "What spending controls are you putting in place to control spending?" You have to do that. There's a cabinet position called the Chair of Management Board, the sort of general manager of government, watching the cash flow, watching the spending. The Premier, Mr McGuinty, when he seeks office, says, "I promise you that I will balance the budget." Well, to do that he has to tell his Minister of Finance and his Chair of Management Board, "Watch the dollars." You have to know what the revenue side is, of course you do, just as we all do in our household budgets. You have to anticipate, make your best prediction about the revenues for the year, and then you have to go to the expense side—what you're spending, and what spending is more important than some other spending, because we have to prioritize, of course. There were no direct answers today from the Minister of Finance, which is a disappointment and I think reflects a developing arrogance already on the Liberal benches about being frank and straightforward with the people of Ontario.

I am concerned that, given the Minister of Finance's failure to be forthright about the revenue side and the spending side, tomorrow we will see an exercise in creative writing by the Minister of Finance which will have all kinds of expense items in it predicted and underestimations on the revenue side. I caution the minister about that, having been there, that a year from now, and two years from now, one will be able to test, when we see the public accounts, whether or not there has been frankness, whether the minister has levelled with the people of Ontario about the current estimates of revenue, which are clearly in excess of \$70 billion, if he levels with the people of Ontario about that and about spending.

1750

I get concerned about spending. They're not supposed to be spending any money. They tell us that they're so concerned. They tell the people of Ontario, "We're so concerned about deficit and spending numbers." The Minister of Education spent \$112 million last week, or the week before. Where did it go? It went to their friends, the big public sector teachers' unions at the Toronto District School Board. Why? Because those trustees there broke the Education Act. They violated the law and voted for a deficit, which is against the law, against the Education Act of Ontario. But what did the minister say? He said, "No, this is for something else. This is for English as a second language."

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask the House to refrain from making interjections, please.

**Mr Flaherty:** The volume of the interjections always follows the veracity of the statement that I'm making, so I'm not surprised that they're exercised about this. You

know what you did. You knew the city of Toronto school board deficit was between \$43 million and \$48 million; you gave them \$46 million. "Let's get rid of that deficit." Worse than that, you know the message that sends to all the law-abiding school trustees across the province of Ontario: Break the law; don't be conscientious; don't do your job; don't act for those people who elect you as trustees in good faith. Are we going to see more of this tomorrow from the new Minister of Finance, more of this sleight of hand, more of this failure to be frank with the people of Ontario?

That's not whom they elected. They elected the other side here because they wanted change. That's democracy and that happens, but they expect veracity in government. I'm telling you that the Premier has failed that test with this whopper promise, and now the Minister of Finance is failing that test of frankness, that credibility test with the people of Ontario. You only lose your credibility once. The Premier already has, on that huge commitment, and here it was: "We will hold the line on your taxes"—all our taxes. But no, we have this Bill 2 that raises taxes all over.

I want to talk about this for a moment, small business in Ontario. They talk about corporations as if they are a bad thing. You know, 65% of the businesses in this province are small business. Do you want to know how small? Fewer than five employees—small family businesses, convenience stores, service businesses. These are the small, hard-working businesses in the province of Ontario. They get called corporations and they're told they shouldn't get corporate tax breaks. My goodness, these are the people who create the jobs. More than half the jobs created in Ontario in the past eight years were created by small business. They are the engine of the economy of Ontario, and Ontario in turn is the engine of the Canadian economy. Be careful what you do when you increase taxes against small people in this province. And don't go around talking about big corporations. You know whom you're talking about. If you are frank, if you are credible with the people of Ontario, you are talking about people working darn hard, day after day in their own small businesses in Ontario, trying to grow, trying to employ more people and being pretty successful at it, thank goodness, in this province.

Retroactive taxation: I only have a few minutes, but this has to be said. Retroactive taxation is abominable. It is avoided in every informed jurisdiction, except in the most dire circumstances, but here vindictively, the Liberal government retroactively takes away a tax credit to middle-class and working-class parents in the equity in education tax credit, to the parents who send their children to the Wallaceburg Christian School, which I have visited, to two of the Muslim schools in Toronto which I have visited, to the Jewish schools in Toronto and elsewhere which I have visited. We fund Catholic schools. That's well known. It's wrong to discriminate against Jewish and Christian and Muslim parents in this province. You should be ashamed of yourselves for doing it. Then, to retroactively take away a credit that they have



budgeted for all this year of 2003, from the school year 2002-03 and 2003-04—that's wrong, it's vindictive, it's mean-spirited, and then to take even more than that credit is worth and give it to whom? The Toronto District School Board public service unions, so you can pay them back and congratulate and reward those trustees at the Toronto District School Board who broke the law of the province of Ontario.

So what do we have? We have a government that's intent on big spending. The member for Leeds-Grenville described 1985-90, doubling the provincial spending. We are going to see massive provincial spending by these folks on the other side. We are going to see a lack of accountability. It's started already today, when the Minister of Finance won't be candid about either revenue or spending. We'll see more of it tomorrow, when he won't be candid about either the revenue side or the spending side. The people of Ontario won't be able to judge where we really are because of that.

We will then see a resentment to work. I don't know how else to put the whining. This government was elected October 2. What do we hear? Whining. The Chair

of Management Board today, the Minister of Finance today—my goodness, get on with it. You were elected, you got the most votes, you got the most seats. Get on with it and do your job. Balance the budget because your leader said you would. Keep your promise. Be candid with the people of Ontario; be open; be frank. Help to restore faith in our system so that the number of people that vote will go up. Don't disparage our system. Encourage people, especially young people, to have faith in our system. How do you do that? You do that by being credible, by doing what you said you would do in order to get their votes.

I urge the members opposite, in caucus and in your cabinet discussions, please get away from these broken promises, try not to have any more tax hikes and, for goodness' sake, stop whining. Get on with your job. You were elected to do the job. Be frank with the people of Ontario and get on with it.

**The Acting Speaker:** It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until a quarter to 7 tonight.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament**Assemblée législative  
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(Hansard)****Tuesday 16 December 2003****Mardi 16 décembre 2003**Speaker  
Honourable Alvin CurlingPrésident  
L'honorable Alvin CurlingClerk  
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum in the House?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** Is there a quorum in the House?

**Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller):** Quorum is present.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much.

### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 15, 2003 on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** I suspected there was a quorum, but with this government and their experience yesterday with the finance and economic affairs committee, you can't take anything for granted. The chief whip is obviously upset, and I can understand him being upset, given what happened. I don't consider it a low blow at all, when you look at the number of witnesses who took time off from their busy schedules to appear before that committee, hoping they would have a real opportunity for input into the auto insurance legislation, and were left effectively cooling their heels, discussing it with the members of the committee.

The brand new government, a significant majority government, failed to have their members present, meet the test of a quorum and give these good citizens of Ontario an opportunity to have input into this important piece of legislation that the government has lauded and indicated how much it's going to save consumers. Yet they couldn't find enough members in a majority to ensure they had a quorum. It's very difficult to understand.

I said earlier that if this was a minority government situation, we could recognize and appreciate there are some real challenges. I was a whip myself in opposition and I know that it can be a difficult job at times. But certainly with 72 members in the House, failing to meet quorum is inexcusable—I think that's a fair word to use.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. I want to talk about a number of things in the 20 minutes allotted to me. I had been able to cover some ground earlier with respect to the current government, but I think it's fair to revisit some of the comments I made earlier today with respect to this government.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Don't repeat yourself.

**Mr Runciman:** Mr Patten, the member for Ottawa Centre, is here. It's good to see him. He's been a long-time contributing member to the assembly. I hope any of his interjections are very positive and helpful, as I'm sure they will be.

**Mr Patten:** Absolutely. I want to hear new material.

**Mr Runciman:** I assure him that before the conclusion of my remarks, there will be some new material.

I think it is important to continue to remind my friends across the aisle that they should sit back. They have a number of people who went through the 1985-90 experience. They should make sure that they're talking to these people. They should have an opportunity for input in terms of what went wrong: "Why did we fail so badly after five years in government, between 1985 and 1990? Why did the people of Ontario reject us so soundly and, beyond belief, elect an NDP government?"

**1850**

There are a lot of reasons for that, and I think those of us who went through that period have some appreciation for it, because obviously we were serving in this place and we saw the actions of the Liberal government of the day and we also heard from the people as we campaigned on the hustings in 1990. Certainly arrogance was at the top of the list, and "arrogance" was in capital letters as well.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Runciman:** Well, I can suggest to you that we saw arrogance in the House on a daily basis. We saw it in Mr Peterson's actions with respect to conceding Senate seats in the Meech Lake discussion. We saw Mr Peterson's arrogance in calling an early election, only three-plus years into a mandate. In retrospect, of course, we know why he did that. Some of his cabinet colleagues did not know why he did that, but the reality was they had tabled a balanced budget with a modest surplus earlier that year, knew by May or June that they were in a very serious financial situation, that in fact they were going to be facing a serious deficit situation, that they'd have to make some very difficult decisions to meet that deficit challenge head-on and didn't want to tell the public about it. That's the reality: They didn't want to tell the public



about it. If they'd taken the mandate out until the normal term of four years, it would have been apparent to everyone in the province that they had led the people of Ontario down the path with respect to a balanced budget. That's why Mr Peterson, in close co-operation with Robert Nixon, the former Treasurer of the province—between the two of them and their political backroom cronies—decided, "Let's get this thing out of the way before the people really know what's happening, before the people really know that we've been attempting to pull the wool over their eyes with respect to our financial management of this province." That's the reality. That's what happened. That's just one part of the arrogance of the former Liberal government.

The reality is that we're seeing that here after only, what is it, seven weeks and change with this new government?

**Ms Monique Smith (Nipissing):** Eight weeks.

**Mr Runciman:** Is it eight weeks? We're seeing it already with this new government. I have friends across the way—

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I don't know about that.

**Mr Runciman:** Well, on some days I have friends: other days, not so much friends. But once we walk away from this place, hopefully we can put a lot of the political baggage aside.

When I say this, you can look at it as being helpful or simply as being critical or political, but I think we all have to learn from past history. You have some people here who went through those years, and hopefully they're not only reflecting upon it but making a contribution around the cabinet table and the caucus rooms about, "Let's not make the same mistakes we made between 1985 and 1990."

Some of their colleagues are already making those mistakes, in terms of their reaction when we raise issues, by yelling across the floor, "That's the reality of October 2. You lost the election. You got kicked in the pants. You're paying the price. We are now on this side of the aisle, and we have every right to do what we're doing." To some degree that's very accurate. They did win the election: there was a call for change in the province, and they were the beneficiaries of that call.

In terms of their campaign promises, I believe they have a right, and in some respects a duty, to implement the promises they made. Another aspect of arrogance in terms of promises is the fact that they're very quickly walking away or running away or hiding from many of the 231 promises they made in the election program.

**Mr Patten:** Give us a list of them.

**Mr Runciman:** I can give you a list of failures, and I will, before my time is up, if the member from Ottawa Centre really wants to hear this.

Certainly one of the things they did not talk about during the election campaign was retroactivity with respect to the education equity act. My colleague from Nepean has talked about this at significant extent and how unfortunate this part of the initiative is and the fact

that people have planned, made decisions. Many of these people are not high-end, high-income families in the province, but people who send their kids to a Muslim school, or a Christian school. I certainly have small Christian schools in my riding. These people are not wealthy, well-to-do families. These are hard-working families, both parents working hard to meet ends and trying to provide their children with a Christian education. As a result of this retroactive provision in the tax bill, they are going to be penalized even further for their views and their wishes in terms of the education of their own children. That's truly unfortunate, but again, the fact is that the current government, the Minister of Finance, the Premier and the committee, which has a majority of Liberal members, are unwilling to even address that very valid concern which was not part of their election platform.

Coming into this without a lot of prepared comments, my theme is in terms of arrogance. I think a lot of the initiatives and undertakings of the current Liberal government can fall under that broad theme of arrogance. One of the things that I have watched, being a member for almost 23 years, is the deterioration in this House. I think some of it has to be attributed to—I'm not blaming anyone; this is a reality—the Liberal government in 1985 starting to televise the proceedings. It was an initiative that I supported, but I think that has in some way contributed to the way this House and members of this House have performed since the introduction of television.

There's a whole range of reasons why it has happened, but certainly I believe, and I think sincerely the government House leader believes, that we should be doing things, undertaking initiatives that can improve the performance of this place and improve the impression that the public have of this place and the meaningful contribution that this place and individual members can make to the well-being of the province of Ontario. One of the reasons that I supported a pilot programming motion was improvement in terms of co-operation. I'd like to see that continue, but I think there have been a number of things that have occurred since we agreed to this new initiative that are a cause for concern.

Certainly the finance committee's failure to meet quorum, and the government's subsequent refusal to provide additional committee time to ensure that the witnesses who appeared have a full and on-the-record hearing before the committee, is unfortunate, to say the least. It also sends a message to those of us who want to see this place operate in a more co-operative and better fashion. It sends a wrong message to all of us.

Earlier on, the government's insistence on having government members perform the duties of chair and vice-chair of the government agencies committee again raised very serious questions about the government's commitment to democratic reform. It is unheard of in parliamentary democracies that allow the review of government appointments, where a government member will chair a committee reviewing government appointments. It casts a cloud over the process; there's no



question about it. The public and those who care about these kinds of issues have to question the credibility of the process—there's no question about that—and the sincerity of the government with respect to wanting to not only engage its own members in a meaningful dialogue but engage members of the opposition in making a real and meaningful contribution to the deliberations of this Assembly. I would encourage the government—we still have two days—to provide that additional sitting time for the finance committee, to provide a night sitting. It is not unheard of, Speaker—you and I have been around this place for some time—to have a night sitting of a committee so that we can afford those witnesses a return opportunity to provide input into the deliberations before we bring the bill back to this place for third reading.

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I referenced this earlier today, again under the broad theme of arrogance. The member of the third party raised an issue that I know is dear to the hearts of many members of the NDP, and this is the provision of services for parents with autistic children. Again, a very valid point was raised, and what was the response that we got from the minister responsible for children? She said, "Blame it on the former government. Blame it on the former government that we're not keeping our promise." Once again: "We are not keeping our promise. Blame it on the former government."

Let's look at the history of this promise. I think what the member for Sudbury was referencing was a letter written by the now-Premier as Leader of the opposition, 10 calendar days before the election, promising to extend benefits to autistic children—10 days before the election. Now put this in context with respect to the claims they are making about this bogus \$5.6-billion deficit. We had finance committee hearings in April or May, where the now-Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet suggested that the deficit could be as high \$5 billion.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** I never said that.

**Mr Runciman:** Well, you suggested that. That number was referenced. I haven't seen the minutes.

**Hon Mr Phillips:** Don't quote me, then.

**Mr Runciman:** I didn't quote you directly. My understanding, and what I read in the print media, is that you referenced a \$5-billion figure.

**Hon Mr Phillips:** Well, you're wrong.

**Mr Runciman:** If that's wrong, I do withdraw. Certainly there was a reference from the then-finance critic, Mr Philips, that there was going to be significant financial pressure. What the number might be we'll leave to conjecture, but certainly during the election campaign we heard claims from the Liberal Party that the deficit was going to be significantly above \$2 billion. Mr McGuinty, the now-Premier, was saying from the outset, "We built this into our economic plan. We can deal with a \$2-billion shortfall and still meet all of our 231 campaign commitments."

And then, during the course of the election, we had the Fraser Institute, I think, and Mark Mullins indicate that

the deficit was going to be closer to \$5 billion if the government didn't make some necessary changes to address it—a projected deficit in the neighbourhood of \$5 billion from the Fraser Institute. In that environment, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, where they indicated publicly that they knew there was going to be a significant budgetary challenge, anywhere between \$2 billion and \$5 billion—this was public information—Dalton McGuinty said 10 days before the election, "I will meet this commitment. I make this solemn promise to you, the parents of autistic children."

So what happens? Here we are now, seven weeks into this government, and we hear this tired refrain from the government benches, "Blame it on the former government. We can't keep our promise. We made the promise in the full knowledge of the challenges we were going to face, but we're not about to accept responsibility." That falls under the heading of arrogance. There's no question about it.

I want to continue on this theme and talk about the report on racial profiling by the human rights commission last week, and the response of the government of the day by the Minister for Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Premier. It was a knee-jerk response. It was a response to special interests who have supported the Liberal Party for the past number of years, including the Toronto Star, very vigorously and actively, and unprofessionally in my view as a former newspaper reporter. The Star has always been a black mark on journalism, in my view. In any event—

**Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** OK, Mr Alliance Leader.

**Mr Runciman:** Mr Speaker, we had trouble controlling her in opposition; can't you do something about her in government?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Runciman:** Who has the floor, Mr Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker:** I ask the Minister of Community and Social Services to refrain from interjections, please.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Go sign your Christmas cards.

**Mr Runciman:** Yes, do something productive.

Where was I? I think it's important, because I know this is a very sensitive issue. No one knows it better than I in terms of being in a justice portfolio for six of the last eight years, when you're walking on egg shells talking about this kind of issue. I think that's a message that was not delivered to the Premier and, as I'll call him, the Solicitor General before they went into a scrum. I think it was a knee-jerk reaction to vested interests and special interests who've supported the Liberal Party—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Your time has expired.

Questions and comments?

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** As always, it is a pleasure to listen to the member from Leeds-Grenville. I honestly must tell you that when he speaks I



often do not agree with him, but he speaks on such a broad range of topics that it's interesting. He went from retroactivity of the government's bill, to the finance committee and the lack of quorum, to autistic children, to the \$5.6-billion risk—I use those words advisedly to the minister—and then to racial profiling. He did all of that within about 10 minutes.

Just to deal with some of that, the retroactivity provisions of this government I find to be objectionable. I find them to be unparliamentary and I find them to be very bad law. In that regard, at least, I must stand here and say that I commend him for his statements, even though I believe with all of my heart and with all of my soul that the public education system is where we should be putting the money and that the public education system is crying out for that money.

No law in this country that has ever been retroactive has been a successful law. You cannot lead people to expect one thing and then suddenly make illegal or wrong what they have come to expect. If you are going to change the law, which I commend the government for changing, you must change it to make it current. When you make it current, people would then know what to expect. Being retroactive on this position is as wrong as retroactively changing the Criminal Code to make something illegal yesterday that wasn't, so that someone might find themselves in that kind of difficulty.

He also talked about the plight of autistic children. Today was a very telling day, when the government used its muscle, its legislative and legal muscle, to go down to the courts to fight those poor parents who are only trying to do the best for their children. I would ask this government to live up to what you stood for in the election and to fight for ordinary people and not what you've done in these last couple of days.

**Hon Mr Phillips:** I want to respond to the member for Leeds-Grenville. I see on a daily basis the mess we were left. I just say to the people of Ontario, recognize this: The hospitals in the province of Ontario spent \$800 million in operating costs and the province did not provide the funding for that. They have had to go out and borrow that money; that's \$800 million in debt to March 31, 2003. The government said to the hospitals, "You keep spending the money, you go borrow the money," so \$800 million of debt—operating cost and debt. Children's Aid Societies—\$25 million. The province reported enormously inflated profits from Ontario Power Generation last fiscal year. The budget was barely balanced last year. When you add in these costs, we were running a real deficit. What I now find, on a daily basis, are costs that the government never had in its budget—\$1 billion that the Provincial Auditor identified—\$400 million alone on hospital deficits this year; \$180 million in pay equity, not in the budget; children's aid societies \$60 million, not in the budget.

#### 1910

What we found was a fiscal statement that bore no relationship to reality, and that's the kindest thing I can possibly say. So I want to assure the people of Ontario

we are rolling up our sleeves, we are putting in place real cost controls. But on a daily basis we find the mess left by the previous government and we are going to deal with that. But it borders on, at best, irresponsible and in some respects terribly—"misleading" is perhaps a word I can't use—a misrepresentation of the numbers.

**Mr O'Toole:** It's clear now—I can say this with some assurance—that when the member for Leeds-Grenville speaks, people listen. The responders today are an indication of how seriously they take his comments.

The member for Beaches-East York, a very respected member of the NDP, in fact one of the few members who are here, took the time to be here to comment. But when I think of the Chair of Management Board being here in an evening session—he knows the numbers, I give him credit. He knew there was a \$5-billion deficit, and what I just heard him say out of trepidation at the member for Leeds-Grenville's remarks is that tomorrow we're going to hear that there's a deficit. In fact, they're planning on having a bigger deficit. He's just added on the Hydro numbers. He's just added on the hospital deficit numbers. I think it may be a leak.

#### Laughter.

**Mr O'Toole:** No, it could be, because he's in the secret cabinet meetings, so he knows—he's Chair of Management Board. It just shows, if you want to route this back to the member for Leeds-Grenville, that when he speaks people listen. His 20-plus years' experience here have led me to believe that the people of Ontario elect us to govern going forward. They've been governing looking in the rear-view mirror. All we've heard about is the previous government. I'll give the members of government this opportunity: Yes, there was a bump in the road, and it may have been as much as \$2 billion, but the road goes forward. The road ahead is this: You have to make difficult decisions. That's the challenge before you, and the member for Leeds-Grenville has brought that to your attention. You're not up to the job.

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I'm pleased to rise in the few moments I have to make comment. I actually think that the Chair of Management Board has stated it so very well. I think we are going to learn a lot more about the mess and the mismanagement we have inherited from the previous Conservative government.

Members in both opposition parties have really railed against this debt of \$5.6 billion. They question that. I remind the viewers at home that it was not the Liberal Party that said it was \$5.6 billion. It was not our leader and it was not our finance minister who discovered this. It was not our management board chair or anyone with me here tonight, but it was the renowned and respected Mr Erik Peters who looked into the finances of this province and found that we are faced with a \$5.6-billion deficit. I think that members opposite should understand that it was not any of us on these benches who came forward with it. I am certain that if it had been one of the Liberal members who came into this House or to the press and said it was \$5.6 billion, they would have disagreed with that as well.



**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** Stop whining.

**Mr Hoy:** The member opposite said, "Quit whining." When the Conservatives were in government, they blamed everybody: municipalities, school boards, the federal government, hospital directors, school board chairs. They had no accountability. They did not hold meetings with the groups that are important to Ontario, and I'm disgusted with the way they acted.

**The Acting Speaker:** I recognize the member for Leeds-Grenville with a two-minute response.

**Mr Runciman:** I appreciate the interventions of all members, even though some obviously don't support my view of the world, and I understand that.

I would like to briefly respond to the Chair of Management Board's comments. He and his colleagues make reference to rolling up their sleeves and getting down to work. Well, we have yet to witness them getting down to work. All we hear every day, ad nauseam, is the blame game, and we heard it again this evening. Instead of actually dealing with the fiscal challenge that everyone knew was facing them—and we would have faced it and we would have dealt with it—they're simply blaming the former government rather than effectively dealing with it.

With respect to the Peters report, we know there are a whole range of very questionable areas that Mr Peters included, including the hydro debt, which historically has been separate from the government's books, but again, he threw that in. We will witness tomorrow everything but the kitchen sink being thrown into this deficit projection.

The plan of this government is to inflate the deficit and then spend into it. I think we'll hear from the Minister of Finance tomorrow: "The deficit is above \$6 billion, and we're not going to do a damn thing about it except blame the former government and spend into that deficit and perhaps beyond." That's shameful, and Ontarians will pay for it for years and years to come.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** It's great to have an opportunity to speak in this place. Just to tell the folks, it's 7:20. Welcome to this political forum. We're on live. Don't change your channel. Throw everything out of your house, but keep your televisions on. My friend Michael Prue will be speaking after me, after the usual round, so don't go away. There is a lot that we need to say here.

I want to start off by saying that a lot of the Liberal members, the new ones in particular, say, "We need to start working together and we need to be frank about things. We need to be as honest as we can be with each other." I think that's good. I think it's a good thing to try to work in that way, as honestly as we can, as frankly as we can, with each other and with the public. My question to the new members and to the old Liberal members is, when does honesty begin and when does it end? Does it begin during an election campaign or does it begin when you get elected as a government? Those are important questions that need to be asked.

My point is that honesty with the public and with each other is always on the table, during an election campaign

and after, should you become the government. It doesn't mean that once you get elected you begin as if you have this tabula rasa, from which you start all over again, and everything you've said and done in the past doesn't count any more. That's not the way it works, because people don't forget what we said in this place.

Speaking of what people said in this place, I want to begin with my friend Gerry Phillips, now the Chair of Management Board. Here's a unique problem to reflect on. Gerry Phillips said, in a June committee of estimates—Gerry, I don't want to misquote you. You said something to the effect of, "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget." That's what the member always wants us to say. He said that during the Conservative reign there was a \$5-billion risk.

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You understand that Erik Peters, the man hired by the Liberals to assess the books, said just a couple months ago, whenever that was, that according to him and his review, the Liberals had in their hands a \$5.6-billion risk. Just to remind my friend Gerry, because I like Gerry, Erik Peters said it's a \$5.6-billion risk. But, Michael, have you ever heard any Liberal refer to that as a risk?

**Mr Prue:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** What do they say?

**Mr Prue:** Deficit.

**Mr Marchese:** They say "deficit." I have never heard one Liberal member in this assembly refer to the remarks of Erik Peters, a well-respected auditor—I liked Erik Peters when he criticized us when we were in government; he was doing his job. He did his job under the Tories; he's doing his job under the Liberals—a very respected individual. He called it a \$5.6-billion risk, but every Liberal in the assembly never, ever refers to Erik Peters's numbers as a risk. They refer to the numbers as a \$5.6-billion deficit.

By corollary, I would then say that if Liberals can refer to Mr Peters's remarks as a deficit, given that he referred to them as a risk, I therefore too say that the remarks of Gerry Phillips, now the Chair of Management Board, apply. So Mr Phillips was correct when he said it was a \$5.6-billion risk/deficit. I don't think there's a disagreement with that. It's hard to refute, given that every Liberal in this place refers to Mr Peters's numbers as a deficit.

I throw this out to you, the general public watching this forum, so that when you hear some of the Liberal members say, "But I said it was a risk; I didn't say it was a deficit," Mr Peters's remarks about the risk are that the Liberals called it a deficit. I just wanted to put that on the record.

What I want to put on the record as well is that when we say we need to be frank with each other, we need to be frank with each other prior to the election as well. As I look at all the election promises of the Liberal government, we need to review each and every one that has been broken. I want to do that as carefully and as slowly as I can, not for the benefit of the members here, but for the benefit of those who sometimes do not have the



luxury to have before them some of the remarks made by the Premier and other ministers in the election campaign.

During the election campaign Monsieur McGuinty, the now Premier, used to talk about how devastating the cuts that were made by the then Conservative government were to people around Ontario in every sector imaginable, be it education—elementary, secondary or post-secondary—be it health, be it environment, be it social services, culture, Ministry of Natural Resources. Whatever you can think of, he and we together attacked the Conservative government for the devastating cuts and how they affected our social structure and infrastructure in this province. He used to talk about the need to invest and reinvest, and now he says that cuts are on the table.

Promise made: “The Harris-Eves government tried to paper over problems, often problems of their own making, by taking the easy route of cutting public services in vital areas such as education, health care, water and food inspection. It’s time for a change”—Dalton McGuinty, *Ottawa Citizen*, Op-Ed, September 30, 2003. This was a mere couple of days before the election. He was reminding people that he would reinvest. It didn’t matter that Gerry Phillips then said, “There’s likely to be a \$5-billion risk/deficit.” It didn’t seem to matter then, but I would have worried. And even though many Liberals say and claim, naive though they may be, that the Tories claimed, not so naively, that there was no deficit, that the Liberals should have believed them is beyond my comprehension.

Many Liberals claim, in fact, that the Tories said there was no deficit, as if to suggest that they believed them. We didn’t believe them. Most Liberals I know didn’t believe them, or that. They knew there was a serious deficit that had to be dealt with, yet Liberals made promises, suggesting they would keep them no matter what. I say to you that you need to be held accountable for those promises. You can’t paper over them, as McGuinty said. You can’t do it. I will remind you as long as I can so that the public watching will be able to remember and not forget as we move forward and as we reflect on the throne speech that attempts to move us forward.

The promise broken is this: “We’re going to consider some ideas which to this point of time might have been on the list of the unmentionables, those things that might be unthinkable.... Inevitably, we’re talking about some (service) reductions.” That’s Premier Dalton McGuinty quoted by CP, November 21, 2003, a month and some days after getting elected. It didn’t take long.

I’ll remind you about the broken promise on the Oak Ridges moraine. I’ll remind you, good citizens, that Mr McGuinty, the Premier, is a lawyer. While some of you hold lawyers in higher regard than others, and I do too, one needs to reflect on what he said prior to the election, given his legal background, as a way of understanding what he said then and what he did later, leading you to question either one’s abilities or one’s motives. Prior to the election, Mr McGuinty said:

“The Eves government secretly approved a plan to build 6,600 new homes on one of the most sensitive spots

on the” Oak Ridges “moraine in Richmond Hill. We will stop their construction”—the Ontario Liberal plan for strong communities, 2003.

The broken promise: “The Liberal government has struck a deal with developers to allow the construction of more than 5,600 homes on the Oak Ridges moraine, reversing Dalton McGuinty’s election pledge to halt development on the environmentally sensitive area.”

Do you understand? Before the election, he was convinced that he would stop the construction of those homes on the Oak Ridges moraine. He and all of his members claimed that they would do that, including the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who but mere days after the election was going around attacking the developers, saying they were going to stop the Oak Ridges moraine. Little did he know that no sooner than a couple of weeks later, the Premier would change his mind and declare his inability to stop the construction of those homes on the Oak Ridges moraine.

Now, if you were a lawyer, you would understand liabilities: expropriation, what it might cost to break a legal contract. I would think you would have all of that pretty well figured out. If you didn’t calculate that, then you would question the judgment of a lawyer in this case. If he did, you’d still question the judgment of that lawyer because in the end, he completely reversed himself. How does one do that? And what do those promises mean before an election? These are big promises. You understand, people elect us on the basis of the promises we make—not on what we will do once elected but on what we said prior to the election. That’s what matters. That’s what counts. Your promises and your words have to count for something. In these two specific instances, it counted for so very little. Mr Gerretson gets up and says, “At least it’s a better deal than what the Tories got.” Sorry, it’s only marginally better.

And all I say is that we said prior to the election that the Liberals are so closely connected to the developers—more so or as much as the Tories—that they won’t be able to break that deal. Liberals are closely associated with developers. People ought to know that. We knew McGuinty couldn’t keep that promise, except many of you believed him. That’s what you get.

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Let me move on to other promises. On the issue of immediate funding for education, the promise made by Mr McGuinty and others: “It’s time to put kids first by tackling crises in our education system that demand immediate attention.” That was Dalton McGuinty.

“Mr Eves and his budgets created these problems. Students need them tackled now. They can’t wait for more reviews and more rhetoric from the government.” That was a press release from the office of Dalton McGuinty, June 3, 2003.

The broken promise: “Where was any mention of Rozanski in the throne speech?” asked Annie Kidder, spokesperson for the parent advocacy group People for Education. Where was anything that could help the 40,000 children on waiting lists for special education, or



the 122 schools right across the province being considered for closing. "Are we saying," she says, "children need to wait for the deficit to be reduced before we can help them?" Yes, Annie, that's what they're saying.

One of the most important promises they made on education was that they would reduce class sizes in grades 1, 2 and 3—although they say JK and SK as well—to 20. We said that promise would cost \$400 million to \$1 billion. Unless new money came into the province from new sources, Liberals could not keep that promise. I said that in debates with Mr Smitherman on one of the regular programs we had—it was counterSpin. George mocked me that day when he said, "Oh, yes, we are." He kept interrupting me three times, "Oh, yes, we are." We said, "George, you can't do it. You can't keep your promise." Someone was lying on that, right? It wasn't me. They couldn't do it. Now they're in government and they say, "Oops, there's a \$5.6-billion risk, a so-called deficit, but we won't call it that—or we will call it that because that's OK and we won't be able to do anything."

The 40,000 students waiting for special education, those who are in the most terrible need of attention, might just have to wait a little longer. But that was OK for Mr Kennedy, the then-Liberal Party education critic, to say day in and day out, like Marchese, "We've got to get rid of that waiting list for special education students. It's simply wrong, unjust to those who desperately need help." No sooner do they get in government than they might not be able to find the money to do it.

Understand, listeners, these are promises that were made that I am sure persuaded you that the Liberals were on the right track and that they were representing your wishes well. Many of you supported them on the basis of those promises. How do you feel about them now? How do you feel about the Minister of Education, Mr Kennedy, going around announcing that there will be a moratorium on school closures?

**Mr Hoy:** Good idea.

**Mr Marchese:** Pat Hoy says, "Good idea." I agree. Except there is no money. How can you keep schools open where he, the Minister of Education—and I agree, and Pat Hoy too, on the value of keeping small schools open. But the Minister of Education simply doesn't flow the money, and he says there won't be any money. But he declares and sends the demand by fiat that schools will not close.

I say to you and I say to him and I say to all of you, we can only keep schools open if money flows from this government and this minister to keep schools open this year. Money has already been allocated for our schools. Come September, unless there is new money, there will be some boards that will decide, "Without new money we can't afford to keep the school open," not, "Because Mr Kennedy says we shall, we will." There is no new money, and all of those promises that sounded so good then are so hollow now.

The energy cap—the cap on the cap: So many of the members said, "Why, when we were in opposition we

supported the cap on our energy bills because we were trying to protect seniors." Oh? If it was good to protect seniors then, as we were building up our debt with close to \$800 million that we will have to pay, that our children will have to pay, we no longer want to help seniors when we increase the cap, which forces seniors to pay a little more on their hydro, without any talk about how we're going to deal with the privatization and deregulation of our hydro services? You believe you're helping seniors now by increasing their costs but you couldn't do it before the election, because then you wanted to help them, but you can't or you won't or you think it's unreasonable, that now that you are in government you are responsible and need to be careful and judicious with the way you spend money, but it was OK in opposition to say differently. You understand the problem; you've got big problems. People are not going to forget. You've created such a terrible mood for yourselves that you're not going to be able to shake it.

By the way, speaking to the tax credit, New Democrats oppose the tax credit for private schools, each and every one of us is strongly opposed, but you've come up with the idea of doing it retroactively. Some of you trustees and others, how do you find it politically advantageous to go back into people's pockets from two years past? When you're intelligent, what you should be doing is saying, "Henceforth, people won't be getting the benefit of the tax credit any longer." But to say, "Well, we were against the tax credit from the beginning, and we're going to go back and pick those people's pockets from two years ago," when people have made arrangements for whatever monies they have in their pocket—to say that's justifiable, I'm telling you, you have made a big political error. You have broken so many promises that it is my job as a New Democrat, and the job of those of us here, to remind each and every one of you that you can't begin a new slate unless you take responsibility for those broken promises of the past.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** As I get up to talk about the throne speech, I just want to remind the member for Trinity-Spadina that on October 2 the people of Ontario decided in favour of a positive change. They told us, and they gave us a mandate, to fix health care delivery in Ontario. Approximately one million people in Ontario do not have a family doctor. As a family doctor, I'm very well aware of the fact that Ontarians did not get the health care they deserved during the past eight years. A couple of weeks ago, our government renegotiated a contract to build a P3 hospital—P3 means publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable—in my own riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

On October 2, Ontarians also told us to fix their public school system. As this government's commitment, we are cancelling the private school tax credit. This way, our government would be able to fund public schools with more money. The other day the Honourable Minister of Education announced in Mississauga that he's going to give \$120 million as a new fund to the schools. This is



the promise. Dalton McGuinty's government is going to keep its commitments.

1940

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I'd like to congratulate the member from Trinity-Spadina on his speech. Once again, as I've said a number of times in this House, he's one of our most colourful speakers. I didn't hear him refer to the clock tonight. Usually he says—

**Mr Marchese:** I did.

**Mr Dunlop:** Did you? I'm sorry. He usually refers to the audience and tells them what time it is and then leads off with his speech after that.

I think I'd like to talk a little bit about the throne speech—I've mentioned this in the hits before—particularly involving the almost non-existence of the mentioning of rural Ontario in the throne speech. When you think about the diversity—

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Go review your own throne speech.

**Mr Dunlop:** I hear the Minister of Agriculture heckling me over there right now. I'll be interested to see if there are any healthy futures programs or OSTAR recreation programs for rural Ontario municipalities in the next four years. Let's keep a close eye on that. We're looking at a government of 23 cabinet ministers, 21 from cities in the province of Ontario. Even the Minister of Agriculture represents part of the city of London. He's not a rural member. He's upset most of the agricultural communities and the stakeholders already and he's been there for less than two months. Less than two months and you've upset them—simple as that.

I just want to say to the people at home that in the throne speech this government did not relate at all to the citizens of rural Ontario municipalities, which represent 99% of the geography of our great province. As we look forward in the next four years, it will be very interesting to see what programs rural Ontario municipalities and rural Ontario citizens are included in.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Prue:** I hope to be heard above the din of all the people arguing back and forth about who the best rural member is.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. Members of the House—member for Simcoe North, please. Minister of Community and Social Services, please.

Can you restore two minutes to the clock?

**Mr Prue:** I will try again, as the members argue back and forth about who the best rural representative is.

I am here to talk tonight about my colleague Rosario Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina, and the absolutely phenomenal job he always does when he stands up in this House. He speaks with passion, he speaks with conviction, he speaks with knowledge, and while he's doing all of that, he's quite entertaining to watch. I know there is a whole cadre of people out there who watch him and comment about what he has to say each and every time. He has his own little fan club in the

province of Ontario. But I think what he talked about bears some discussion.

He talked about some of the problems with this government and what it's doing wrong. I'd like to go back again to the whole issue of retroactivity. What this government is doing—and I will say again and again that I firmly and with all my heart believe that the school credit should be cancelled. I campaigned on that, I went door to door on that, I explained that and I believe that. But this government has thrown a wrench into what otherwise would be a very good program and campaign promise. They have done it retroactively. They have done a law that no Parliament in this country has ever done successfully. Every government that has ever tried to pass retroactive laws has found out that they have failed in the end, because what you do is make illegal one day that which was perfectly legal while the people carried it out. You have taken away a benefit one day that people had come to expect because the law was the law. It takes away from the rule of law in this country, and it cannot be condoned. I am asking the members opposite to listen carefully to what Mr Marchese had to say and think very carefully before that final step is taken.

**Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to make some comments to my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. I listened intently to some of the comments you made, but I think the first comment that caught my attention was your definition of honesty: Is it before the election or after the election? I would say to you that I think, for every member in this House, myself included, honesty has always been before or after. We didn't come in dishonest and we're not going to leave dishonest.

We talk about this deficit over and over, and I truly believe it exists, but I will tell you that for many of us—and I've talked to a number of my colleagues who have come out of municipal or regional government. For myself, it wasn't about running because there was a deficit, it was about watching for 13 years on city council, and for the last five or six years, the destruction that we felt was happening in our own municipalities: the line-ups in the hospitals, the doctor shortages—I think we were rated two or three in all Ontario for doctor shortages—the transfer payments cut for our transit system, the closure of our driver's licence office, and our seniors—talking about seniors—had to go all the way to St Catharines. I think those were the kinds of things that motivated a lot of us—I know myself—to be here.

In terms of the throne speech, the foundation is the key to any government, whether it's municipal or provincial. The throne speech is a direction that I want to go in. I sure didn't want to go in the same direction that I've watched for the last seven or eight years with the former government. I knew what was going to continue. So yes, I'm proud to be here and I'm proud of the throne speech. There's always room for improvement. Nothing is perfect in this world, but this speech and the direction our government is going in is the right direction. I don't have any problems going back home to Niagara Falls,



Niagara-on-the-Lake, and standing up and saying to the people, "Here's why I'm supporting some of the changes we've had to make because of our financial situation."

**The Acting Speaker:** That concludes questions and comments. I now return to the member for Trinity-Spadina for a two-minute response.

**Mr Marchese:** As usual, I thank friends, and foes as well, for their comments. I would say to the good doctor from Bramalea-Gore that it's true people voted for change. I agree with that, but they voted for change according to the promises they heard from you and your leader. They didn't just simply say, "We're voting for change," without knowing what that change might include. They voted for change on the basis of what you said around many of the important issues that I talked about. And when you break them, it's tough. I'm saying you broke quite a number of them.

I say to the member from Niagara Falls, yes, you promised a lot of things that are costly and that will include new investments. I'm telling you we've seen very little investment. The \$112 million that has been promised by the Minister of Education for literacy programs and ESL programs, some of that money, if not most of the money, is probably going to deal with the problem they've had for many, many years: deficits. The Toronto board is being told they can use that money to deal with their deficit—not wash away the deficit due to the underfunding by previous governments, but that they will be able to use that money for ESL and literacy programs so desperately needed by Toronto. For that, they'll be able to use it to deal with their deficit. I tell you that's wrong. It's a serious mistake.

When the member from Simcoe North talks about rural communities, there's nothing here for cities. Most of the people live in cities; 70% to 80% of people now live in cities. There is absolutely not one cent going to our cities to help them out with their deficit problems. The city of Toronto is desperately waiting for your two cents from the gasoline tax to help them with their \$350-million problem. Due to the downloading by the Conservative government, there's nothing in it for them. You've got to deal with your broken promises in order to move ahead. Unless you do that, you won't be able to go ahead.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** I'm pleased to be here tonight for my inaugural address to the Ontario Legislature. First of all, I would like to congratulate Alvin Curling, our new Speaker, and you, the member from Waterloo-Wellington, who are in the Chair this evening. I'd also like to offer congratulations to all 103 members of the provincial Parliament on their election wins.

I bring to this House 18 years of municipal experience. I was first elected to Peterborough city council in 1985. Through my duties as a councillor, I've served as chairperson of the city's social services committee, as well as second deputy mayor. I was born and raised in the community I represent. I attended elementary, high school and even university within Peterborough's city limits.

I've been married to my wife Karan for nine years and have two young children, Braden and Shanae.

After serving on city council, I look forward to representing not only this city but also the county of Peterborough, in my capacity as MPP. Peterborough riding is located about a 140 kilometres northeast of where I stand today at Queen's Park. It is an economically diverse riding, a blend of urban and rural populations. Outside the city of Peterborough you find many picturesque villages and hamlets surrounded by a patchwork of farms. The Peterborough riding is home of Kawartha Lakes, the heart of the Trent-Severn Waterway system. Each year, boaters and tourists from every corner of the globe visit my riding to enjoy its scenic beauty and take part in recreational activities. Boating and fishing are favourites in the summer. The winter brings snow and hundreds of kilometres of trails for skiing and snowmobiling.

#### 1950

The city, which has a population of about 74,000, is home to a strong industrial sector. This includes companies such as General Electric Peterborough and Quaker Oats. There are smaller success stories as well. Ventra Plastics and Minute Maid have recently announced expansions of their operations in Peterborough.

Peterborough boasts some reputable public institutions as well. Two renowned post-secondary schools, Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College, call the city of Peterborough their home. The schools have worked together on a number of partnerships to better the education of their students. I hope I can serve my riding as well as my predecessors. Former MPPs Gary Stewart, Jenny Carter, Peter Adams, Gillian Sandeman, Harold Scott, Keith Brown, John Turner and Walter Pitman all worked diligently to serve their constituents no matter what their political stripe.

I would be remiss if I didn't make a few comments about my predecessor, Mr Stewart. While Mr Stewart and I didn't share the same political philosophy, Mr Stewart and I did share the view that we've tried to do our best in public life for the citizens of Peterborough. Mr Stewart was very involved in some key projects within my community, moving the hospital project forward, the widening of several highways in the Peterborough area, and some expansions to both Sir Sandford Fleming College and Trent University.

My friends in the NDP may want to know about Walter Pitman. He was the first NDP MP ever elected to Parliament in Ottawa in 1960, after the amalgamation of the Canadian Labour Congress and the CCF. Many issues that these former Peterborough MPPs faced are still relevant today. In March 1968, Pitman described the riding as follows:

"I do want to suggest to you that obviously I do not need to say anything more about the beauty of the constituency that I represent other than this. It has a strong industrial centre and reacts very quickly to changes in technology and trade. It is also an agrarian community, which makes my concern about agriculture very real. We



even have air pollution. This may seem unimaginable, but we do have pockets of air pollution in an area such as Peterborough."

Pitman spoke at great length about fostering region development. He said, "It is up to the government to see that all regions are developed in accordance with an orderly plan, which would include environmental and economic considerations." Thirty-five years later, this is still true. We need to advocate measured development that avoids urban sprawl and allows for environmental and transportation concerns.

Pitman continued, "Well, how large do we want our cities to be? Here is one of the major problems in our society. We are, in Ontario, starting to move toward some form, some have suggested, of megalopolis, which now stretches from Hamilton to Oshawa, and may very well stretch some day from Windsor to Kingston." While Pitman's prediction of a megacity stretching across the northern shores of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario may not come to fruition, it lends itself to the role the Peterborough riding will play in the future.

As a community, Peterborough has discussed and debated how it views itself in relation to the expanding borders of the GTA. Does Peterborough want to try to remain a distinct region capable of surviving on its own, or does the region want to take advantage of the GTA's revved-up economic engine and welcome commuter development?

Peterborough MPP John Turner—I'll note that John Turner was the Speaker of this House from 1981 to 1985, and John and June are close personal friends of mine—touched on this issue in a March 1972 speech to the Legislature when he said, "We must appreciate whether or not Peterborough is to remain as a periphery area and is not to develop; or, if the city of Peterborough is to develop, to what extent and in what respect."

Turner suggested continuing to develop Peterborough's industrial base, but at the same time he envisioned sharing Peterborough's scenic geography with others. "Within the recreational designation for this area, thinking must go beyond cottage development. We must be looking at the development of resort activities, and these resort activities should be promoted for year-round operation," Turner said. "I would suggest, Mr Speaker, that the industrial and commercial aspects of the city of Peterborough could and should be developed along the parallel course with our natural and beautiful resort areas. But the priority should be placed on commercial and industrial development, which would continue to employ our highly skilled people.

"At the same time, our natural resource areas could be developed to provide the recreational facilities not only for our own people but also for the ever-increasing numbers of people who are discovering the beauties of the Kawartha Lakes region."

I would suggest that this is the reality of the greater Peterborough area today. The city has a strong industrial and commercial sector. At the same time, a 10- to 20-minute drive outside the city leads to the wide array of recreational activities I previously mentioned.

Sixteen years ago, MPP Peter Adams, who is now our federal member, spoke of "the proper development of central and eastern Ontario." The GO Transit link to Oshawa and the completion of Highway 115 were two key transportation links Adams addressed. These routes are important to the greater Peterborough area and are important aspects of economic growth.

Construction is beginning on the new Peterborough Regional Health Centre. Slated for completion in 2007, the hospital will continue to provide quality health to area residents.

Looking ahead to my role as an MPP, there are some exciting events occurring in Peterborough riding. Centennial celebrations for the Trent-Severn Waterway lift lock are scheduled for July 9 to 11, 2004. And 2004 marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of the world's highest hydraulic lift lock. At 65 feet, it was and still is one of the engineering marvels of the world. I'd like to note that there are three lift locks in existence: one of the others exists in Kirkfield, Ontario, and the other is located in Germany.

I'd also like to share one new project that has garnered a lot of positive buzz in the Peterborough area: the planned DNA cluster, which would bring together our public institutions and the private sector to further genetic research.

But I'm not only looking forward to the upcoming events in my riding; I also look forward to debates in this House.

Education is a key issue of the new Liberal government. A commitment to public education is this government's most important priority.

A strong foundation for our children's future is vital as they will be the leaders of tomorrow. One of the aspects of this government's commitment to public education is character education. This is a program well underway in the Peterborough riding. Last spring, the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, under the direction of Dr Avis Glaze, introduced character education to our community. Parents, teachers, students and community leaders have met several times to define citizenship values to teach in our area schools. Implementing character education province-wide will benefit our children and our communities as a whole. A commitment to safer schools goes hand in hand with this. Setting up a provincial anti-bullying hotline is a good start.

This government has also committed to improving the reading, writing and math skills of our children. With two young children currently in Ontario's public education system, I can rest better knowing I am working toward making Ontario's education system the best in Canada and indeed around the world.

On the upper end, this government's move to freeze post-secondary tuition rates will allow graduates to emerge with less debt. They will then begin to contribute more efficiently to the economy more quickly.

We must be vigilant, not only in the protection of our children's education but also in preserving and improving our quality of life. Former MPP Jenny Carter addressed this in 1990:



"My constituents are worried about jobs and taxes, about affordable housing, about health services and child care and about the environment. Last summer, beaches were closed more often than they were open. Our urban forest of maple trees is dying. The health and safety of workers is not as well-protected as it should be. Waste disposal problems are acute, particularly in the townships. Environmental problems are no abstraction to my constituents. They lower the quality of life and discourage tourists."

This government's commitment to growing stronger communities through cleaner air and water, halting urban sprawl and introducing more green spaces is something I am proud to work toward.

I wish each and every one of us in this House this evening the best of luck. I look forward to meeting and working with you over the next four years.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** First of all, I want to acknowledge and commend the member for Peterborough on his maiden speech in the House. It was 19 years ago that I did mine, and I was successful in reading it very carefully as well. I do want to welcome him to the House. His riding, as he noted in his comments, has brought some very interesting, colourful and committed individuals to this House. Interestingly enough, Peterborough is notorious for electing individuals whenever there is a strong headwind for any given political party. So I truly and sincerely hope the member opposite enjoys his four years here.

**2000**

The throne speech, which was supposed to be the subject of tonight's debate, will impact the people of Peterborough. I can only believe there must have been a few phone calls after the throne speech to the honourable member opposite from his hospital asking why there was nothing in the throne speech to offer them some encouragement with the health needs of Peterborough. I'm sure he got calls from teachers who, almost to a person, probably took a lawn sign for him and are then wondering, "Why did you lecture us in the throne speech and tell us, 'We'll ask our partners in health care, education and the broader public sector to temper their requests for more, with the realization that what we have now is at risk'?" I'm sure the member opposite would like to have used his full 20 minutes to explain to those teachers, those physicians and the medical community why there was nothing in the throne speech for them.

**Mr Prue:** I listened with great interest to the member from Peterborough. We share some mutual friends in Peterborough. I often travel to that town. As a matter of fact, more often than not I'd like to say I travel through that town, but since you built 115, which you talked about, you can take it to Highway 7 and up 134 and come out at Lakefield, and you never see Peterborough any more. I'm not sure that was the best thing for the city of Peterborough, because the downtown core of Peterborough is lovely. It is one of the nicest communities in all of Ontario. It has magnificent old houses, tree-lined

streets, friendly neighbourhoods, but often people who are travelling to cottage country and recreation areas beyond Peterborough, as I do, never get a chance to really see it any more.

I would like to commend the member from Peterborough for his first speech in this House. I would like to commend him for what he had to say about a little bit of the history of that community, and the history that has changed over time. It was at one point, I would suggest, quite an industrialized town. Unfortunately much of the industry that once made Peterborough a great and prosperous community is starting to leave, and Peterborough residents are having to find other sources of income, whether from the recreation community, from drug manufacturing or from things that are not traditional.

I commend him for having been elected, and want to tell him that he should work very hard, because if his goal in this Legislature is to work for the betterment of education, if that is his sole claim to fame at the end of four years when he goes back to the electorate, if he chooses to do so, then I think he would have done the right thing for the citizens of Peterborough, as he might have done the right thing for any number of towns and cities in this province. Our education system has been in a shambles. It needs to be fixed, and if that is your priority, sir, it is a good one.

**Mr O'Toole:** I couldn't resolve not to speak on this important maiden speech from the member from Peterborough. I was born in Peterborough, as he would know, and know many of the same people he does. But it would be remiss of me not to respect a member from Peterborough, my great friend Gary Stewart. I did watch, while I was in the office preparing for my one-hour speech, and you did credit many things to Gary Stewart. Hopefully, your government will continue those. I heard Mr Smitherman commit, in a question from you, that that project—and the administrator was there today. He did meet with the minister, and I did speak with him as well at lunch.

I would only say there are many issues in Peterborough, but even more clear to me—I just wanted to say hello to my mother-in-law, Madge Hall, who might be viewing tonight, because she's now a resident of a retirement home. The retirement home is Jackson's Creek in Peterborough. It's a very nice retirement home. In fact, I hope she's comfortably situated there, because she did have difficult times and did receive extremely good treatment at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre as well as at St Joseph's rehab centre. She's been through a trying time. My heart is in Peterborough, and many of my relatives are there.

There is one issue: You're probably lucky to have recently left the Peterborough council, because they still haven't resolved the parkway issue. As you know, this issue will go on and on. In fact, I could say my uncle, Jack Doris, was the mayor of Peterborough, as you might know. Jack was one of the mayors who could have made a difference, and chose to listen to the people and not do anything. But nonetheless, thank you for your speech. It was timely and accurate.



**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** That was a wonderful speech. I want to congratulate the member.

**The Acting Speaker:** I now recognize the member for Peterborough. You have two minutes to reply.

**Mr Leal:** Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Jackson:** I'm very pleased to be able to offer up some comments and concerns as expressed in this new government's first throne speech since they had this opportunity back in 1985. I remember that because that's the year I entered the Legislature. Within the first few months we had been treated to two throne speeches: one from Frank Miller, who actually won that election, and then a second one from David Peterson as he forged his coalition with the NDP. He had, as we know, two throne speeches, the other in 1987.

Before I begin, I want to put on the record a concern that I have, and I want to put it on up front, because I consider it a serious concern. Members of this House will be aware that I am a monarchist and I support the role of the monarchy in our parliamentary traditions in the full context. The media have acknowledged that this is one of the most political throne speeches that we have seen in many years. That has been amply demonstrated by the number of references criticizing the former government. Instead of looking in the rear-view mirror, this province has been very much accustomed to looking forward to the challenges that are ahead and to the opportunity to bring Ontario's case forward for more prosperity. But this was a unique throne speech, because it was riddled with criticism and impugned motives.

As I think has been mentioned once in the House, when our government of Mike Harris inherited the authority to serve as the government, we inherited a \$10-billion deficit. It was only referenced once in our throne speech—only once. The point was made, and the balance of that throne speech, almost the exact number of pages as contained in the Liberal throne speech, set out a course of action so that we could give Ontarians hope, opportunity and prosperity. That's what Ontarians have become accustomed to. That is not what we got from the Liberals. In fact, they referred to their inherited deficit, or their manufactured deficit, a total of 21 times in an 18-page document.

2010

I listened very intently. As you know, I sit closest to the Speaker, with the exception of my friend and colleague the government House leader. He and I sit closer to the Speaker than any other individuals in the House. So I was able to hear very clearly something which did not appear in the published text that was submitted to the public but which was contained in the final copy of Lieutenant Governor Bartleman's speech. I still have my notes from that day. There's the actual Votes and Proceedings. It's very thin, because all it was was the throne speech, and I had wrote my notes.

The Lieutenant Governor, as I said earlier, is the Queen's representative here in Ontario. This government actually made the Lieutenant Governor read a statement

that in this province the notion that we would support the education of minority groups was, in the words of the government—forcing the Lieutenant Governor to say it—a “reckless private school tax credit.” That is not in the original text that was published, but it is in the Hansard. I was offended by that. I was deeply offended by that. I was offended by it because the monarchy has been a tempering and sobering element in our democracy.

It was the monarchy that spoke out very dramatically against slavery. We were the first jurisdiction in North America to create a bill of rights for citizens for human rights, our Human Rights Code. Ontario seems to have been the model for tolerance, for understanding and for diversity, and yet we have a government which is literally, on the one hand, referring to our party as being bigots and racists simply because we have a policy to deal with persons who are in this province illegally and who are conducting criminal activity; and yet, on the government side, they imply that our policies are discriminatory against the public school system. It's rather disturbing and upsetting.

I have spoken in mosques. I have spoken in Jewish temples. I have been an advocate for the equality of access to education for children in this province. I believe that it builds on our diversity and builds on our sense of what makes Ontario unique. If I were to be asked what is the one thing in this throne speech which—yet it wasn't a surprise. I'm disappointed. It's been documented that the retroactivity of it is punitive, that it has seldom ever been seen by governments anywhere in Canada. And yet this government saw fit to punish these families in a most severe and alarming way and to do it almost as if they were doing the province a great favour because somehow we were breeding intolerance because we had reached out to the diversity community in this province. I wanted it on the record that I felt it was inappropriate and almost an abuse of the privilege of governing to have a throne speech to asking Lieutenant Governor, the Queen's representative, to refer to this element of Ontario life as “reckless.” I just reject that.

The throne speech was on November 20, but the precursor to the throne speech in this province was the fact that the McGuinty government, fresh from its election victory on October 2, on or about October 20 broke its first promise, and that was that they weren't going to hire private consultants. They promptly went out and hired one Erik Peters, who is a retired civil servant. The records will show that many of the consultants our government hired were retired civil servants. When I was a minister, I hired a couple of senior ministry officials who had retired. They were experts in their field, and frankly they were able to get the job done at twice the speed and half the price for their work in long-term care.

Having said that, Mr Peters, as a private consultant at \$1,500 a day, was brought in to give an opinion. First of all, I want to read from Erik Peters's report, their private, highly paid consultant. He says, “As agreed, I have carried out a review, which does not constitute an audit,



of a comparison between the budget for 2003-04, released on March 27, 2003, and the fiscal update for 2003-04 prepared by the Ministry of Finance as of October 24, 2003." This is a snapshot with almost six months left of the fiscal year.

His report goes on to say, "I express no opinion as to what the actual deficit for the year ending March 31, 2004 will be." Somehow, between Eric Peters's report, which was tabled with the media on October 29, and the November 19 throne speech, the Liberals have been successful in managing the media and creating this mystique that the actual deficit of this province is \$5.6 billion.

Rather than spend time in their throne speech talking about what they intend to do about it, they spent most of their time suggesting and impugning motive about the spending of the previous government. On careful examination, one should note that there are some very clear differences between the current government and our former government. The throne speech, if you read between the lines, clearly demonstrates this. For example, our government made a commitment to the Rozanski report and we began implementing it. We began fully funding it. In fact, we were advancing the funds at a rate greater than Rozanski had even suggested we might. He gave us a five-year window. During the course of that five years we had pledged, and were funding, at the rate of almost \$2 billion more.

The Liberals promised that the most they would contribute was \$1.6 billion. So, clearly, the citizens of Ontario felt that they could support the Liberal government as their new government and expect less in education funding in our elementary and secondary schools. Remember, we were pledging more dollars to our school system than the Liberals and we were pledging to provide an equity in education tax credit for families who were providing or obtaining education on the basis of their faith or cultural conviction—there were thousands of families.

We now know that the true cost of that was somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$40 to \$50 million, not the \$450 million that the government suggested. I do recall that the Liberals, at every campaign meeting and every political forum, were saying, "There's \$450 million that we can put into public education." Now, did they do that during the throne speech? No. What they did was honour a political promise they made to the teachers of Ontario, who told their former friends the NDP, "Sorry, we're not going to support you. We're going to be putting all our support behind the Liberals, because they have promised us a couple of things." They did honour their promise to the teachers of Ontario.

They eliminated a balance in the College of Teachers. They are going to hand that institution over to the teachers' federation. They are not going to allow it to be a balanced public and teaching profession. They will pay a price for that, given the fact that it disciplines individuals. That's the system we have for doctors, when doctors are involved in inappropriate behaviour that puts

their patients at risk. Teachers, from time to time—and fortunately in this province, very few—put their students at risk. It is important to have a balance between public members and professional teachers, but this union has secured a promise from the McGuinty government and that was honoured in the throne speech.

They have agreed again to eliminate the need for teachers to do upgrading in the College of Teachers, and for teacher testing. In fairness, I have suggested and have encouraged that we work an accommodation so the teachers can do this during professional activity days, but I still support the principle that all professionals require professional upgrading from time to time. I didn't think it was appropriate that we make them do it after hours, on weekends and during summer holidays. Having said that, those were really the only two commitments that the McGuinty government made to public education: to sort of pay off the teachers for the proliferation of lawn signs. I have to tell you, my favourite lawn sign for the Liberals came out in the last week. It was a picture of Dalton McGuinty, and there were two of them. One of our campaign workers came in and said, "Look at that. There's the two faces of Dalton McGuinty." I thought, what a wonderful observation, what an innocent observation from a young person working on our campaign, that they already figured out that Dalton McGuinty was two-faced, to quote them directly.

#### 2020

The fact of the matter is, the throne speech came up short in many areas. The Liberal candidate who ran against me promised quite openly that he was aware of the deficit at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital. He said, with absolute certainty, "A Dalton McGuinty government will pay that deficit, no problem; vote for me," and he got a lot of votes on that. Yet today in the House we heard the Treasurer acting very surprised, and the Chair of Management Board apparently completely unaware, that hospitals had any deficits in this province, last year or this year. It was a surprise that they were shocked by this revelation, when I've certainly been to functions with the Ontario Hospital Association and I've spoken with my own hospital. Was there anything in this throne speech for them? No, not at all.

There's another angle to this throne speech which is of concern. The Liberals made three income promises during the election. They promised a minimum wage increase and they promised an increase in welfare payments for income support for welfare recipients. The third one was ODSP, the Ontario Disability Support Program. Interestingly, only one of these was mentioned in the throne speech, being the increase in the minimum wage. If we honestly and objectively analyze what these three income promises were, you'll notice that the Liberals have only implemented the one they don't have to pay for. They don't have to pay for a minimum wage increase. They have to ask the private sector to pay increased wages, and then it has to get that back by increasing prices, which as we know will adversely affect low-income people.



The second group, Ontarians with disabilities—if the Conservative government of Ernie Eves had been elected, all disabled persons in this province would have received an increase in income support on January 1. Under the Liberals, they're not going to get that. In fact, they're actually going to get an increase in their taxes. So the spending power of a person on disability actually goes down under the first year of a Liberal government instead of going up further as it would with a Conservative government.

Interestingly enough, they've punished persons with low income by clawing back the seniors' tax credit as well as the income tax credit. They have failed to provide protection for persons on low income. In fact, they've actually added people of low income on to the tax rolls. As you know, our government, through successive tax cuts, had taken almost 800,000 people off the tax rolls and there are some 150,000 people in Ontario who pay federal income taxes but don't pay any provincial taxes because we've been lowering our taxes. Under the Liberals, they have increased taxes. We pleaded with the Minister of Finance, "Please provide some adjustment or protection for low-income persons as you increase their taxes," but those pleas fell on deaf ears, unfortunately.

The third group, those on social assistance, are of concern to us all, partially because the province doesn't pay for this; municipalities pay for this. As most members of this House know, and most people watching know, for this government to honour its promise to provide more income for persons on social assistance, they will have to increase property taxes, and increase them rather substantively. They didn't mention that, nor did they come to the assistance of the poor in their first year, in their first throne speech. Why? Because they have been unable to flow new dollars to municipalities.

We all know today that one of the main ways they're going to be able to do that is because they have removed the cap on hydro rates, which should have stayed frozen until 2006. This is going to cost consumers close to \$1 billion just on their consumption of energy and another \$1 billion on their fees and schedule of costs. That is going to be soaked up as profit and expenses, with a guaranteed profit for distribution companies, most of which are municipally owned. They are going to be able to use their hydro utility as a slush fund to pay for other things, whether it's their welfare payments or whatever.

Not only did this throne speech break a lot of promises, not only did it break trust with the people of Ontario, not only did it not honour the priorities of health care and education reinvestment, it seemed to have paid off some political debts and engaged in a process of propaganda about the size of Ontario's manufactured deficit. The deficit is not the size it is. In fact, there's a quote in today's *National Post* from the organization that deals with fair taxation that clearly states that Ontario's true debt could be as low as \$600 million. If this government would do its job, we could balance the budget.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr O'Toole:** I couldn't resist the opportunity to stand in respect for the member from Burlington, who I'm surprised didn't say more about the energy bill, but he did manage to work in some time on the broken promises that all of us are aware of. I see there are still a few members of the government here.

For the record, just a couple of things: I think it's important to note that the article this morning in the *National Post* is worth referring to. The title is "Ontario's deficit cut down to size," for those viewing tonight, who may include—dare I mention the names of some of my constituents?—Henry Downing, who is just recovering. To all of my constituents, I wish a merry Christmas, because I may not get another chance to speak. Often, I'm limited in the opportunities to speak.

I see Mr Sorbara's here. He has been out most of the night, but he's here now signing Christmas cards. He should be working on the budget, really, because there's more work to be done. He could take some numbers out. He could get some of the numbers out of the budget if he tried. It's clear that the revenues are up but the will is down. The will is not there to actually deal with the deficit. I'm waiting for tomorrow to see what you add as an excuse—I want to put it on the record—to grow the deficit.

There are only a couple of minutes left—28 seconds—but I think it's important that all members at this time of year want to work harmoniously. It's clear that Mr Jackson, who conceivably has a very good shot at being a leader—I would say that I'm watching, because there's so much talent on this side of the House. The people of Ontario need more to be done, and we on this side can do it.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Burlington has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Jackson:** I want to thank the members opposite for commenting on my speech. If it wasn't in the form of the two-minute rebuttal, at least it was an interjection.

I just want to reiterate that there are so many additional revenue opportunities available to this government that were not included in Erik Peters's report. Therefore, I think people were shortchanged in the throne speech. There is the potential for this government to invest in children's services, in our health care system and in our educational system. They did not account for the \$700 million that was—

*Applause.*

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**Mr Jackson:** You guys just want to go home. I want to get this on the record. It's my moment to raise some concerns for my constituents in Burlington. My constituents in Burlington are concerned that they've received \$700 million more from the federal government on the Canada health transfers that Erik Peters refused to acknowledge and this Treasurer refuses to acknowledge. Income taxes for corporations in this province are up \$300 million. The full value of the Teranet sale is worth a further \$200 million. There are supplementary payments from SARS, a full accounting of over \$330 million.



These are issues where, if the government didn't misrepresent the figures—which is something the member from Management Board said earlier—we could be on target to being close to balancing the books and therefore we could get on with the important business of making health care a priority again in this province.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** On behalf of the people of my riding, London-Fanshawe, it's my duty and pleasure to speak today in support of the throne speech. Because the boundary of my riding was established in 1999, I am the first Liberal to represent London-Fanshawe in the Legislature—although I would like to assure the members of this House that I have every intention of setting a long-standing precedent. I would also like to assure the members that it is my intention to represent and voice the needs and concerns of my constituents to the very best of my ability.

If I may, I would like to take a moment to thank my predecessor from London-Fanshawe, Frank Mazzilli, for his work at Queen's Park. Frank was a police officer for 17 years in London and was elected to this Legislature in 1999. Frank was active in the riding and represented his party well.

Manufacturing is a primary employer in London-Fanshawe, and some of the major industries include Accuride, 3M and General Motors. Small businesses are an essential part of the economy right across Ontario, and London-Fanshawe is no exception. The retail sector is also important and the White Oaks shopping area draws shoppers from across the city and region.

While we are on the subject of employers and employment, I would like to mention that income levels in my riding are not as high as the provincial average. This income gap is something that needs to be addressed, and I will work to correct this problem during my time in office. An important first step is the recent government decision to raise the minimum wage. This increase is long overdue and is the first rise in the minimum wage since 1995. We all know that since that time, there has been about a 15% increase in the cost of living. It is time to help those on minimum wage to work in daily life. I would like to commend the government for quick action on this issue. I know that it's only a first step in raising incomes for the poorest members of our society.

London-Fanshawe is home to many outstanding educational facilities, including John Paul II High School, the Robarts Provincial School for the Deaf, Nicholas Wilson Public School and Fanshawe College. I would like to remind members of the House that Fanshawe College is one of Canada's fastest-growing colleges and boasts one of the highest employment rates for new graduates in the entire country.

I am also pleased to represent many constituents who attend the University of Western Ontario, which is located in the neighbouring riding of London North-Centre.

In London-Fanshawe our most valuable assets are our people. Working and living in this community is both a

blessing and an education. Many people are surprised to find out that London is actually a diverse city. My riding is enriched by many groups including those of Arab, Portuguese, Italian, Irish and Polish heritage. I have learned a great deal from those and other communities in my riding.

I decided to move to London-Fanshawe when I came to Canada from Lebanon 15 years ago. I would like to thank my constituents for electing me to this House, where I will work and speak for their needs and their interests.

With my remaining time, I would like to speak about the throne speech and about the government's agenda for this coming session. The throne speech laid out a responsible plan of action for this province. The throne speech made one thing abundantly clear: We cannot mortgage the future of this province by spending more than we have and running up large debts. The consensus is clear: The people of Ontario want to leave our children a financially sound future; we do not want to leave a legacy mired in debt. I am proud to be a part of a government that is committed to this goal, and I am fully supportive of all initiatives that ensure that Ontario is built on a solid financial foundation.

Every dollar of deficit that Ontario chalks up becomes a debt, and every dollar of debt costs the taxpayer more money to service that debt. We want to have enough money to pay down the debt so taxpayers' money goes toward essential services and not to paying off Ontario's creditors. Let's make our spending count by eliminating the need to use a portion of each dollar to pay creditors. Let us set an aggressive goal that will see us use every penny of every dollar to pay for services that improve the quality of people's lives in very concrete ways. Let us use every penny of every dollar to pay for quality education, for accessible and timely health care and to support those members of society who, through no fault of their own, need our extra support. These are things that matter. This is where we need to focus our spending.

A couple weeks ago I met with a very special constituent named Marissa Lauffman. Marissa was born deaf and began to lose her vision in her 20s when she was attending university. Now Marissa is completely blind and depends on interpreters or interveners who use tactile sign language, touching Marissa's hand with a special language that is her only means of interacting with others. When Marissa lost her vision, her life changed.

In a letter, she explained how the loss of her sight has robbed her of very simple things that I am sure everyone in this House takes completely for granted. This is what Marissa wrote: "I can no longer watch TV or read the newspaper. I can no longer go out by myself for exercise. I can no longer see the signs that my friends are using to communicate with me and the people around me."

Marissa has two boys. One is four years old and has started junior kindergarten this year, and the other little boy is two. Both of Marissa's children can see and hear, but their ability to communicate with their mother is limited.



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Marissa gets just six hours of time with an intervener from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind each week so that she can do things like communicate with her children, do her banking, shop for groceries, go to church or come to my office to convey her message. Marissa has written a proposal requesting 30 hours every week. I will use her own words to tell you how much it means to Marissa to have an interpreter to connect her to the life around. She says:

"Intervention allows me to communicate with people, which is an essential part of being human. Intervention has allowed me to feel connected to the people in my life, including my own children. From the moment my sons were born, interveners were there to tell me what my son looked like. Was he crying? What were the nurses doing with him? Was he healthy? Was my husband crying or smiling?

"I still feel I am independent. I wish I did not need the assistance of an intervener. I wish I could live independently like before. But my life has changed. In order to live without isolation, I need intervention services. I'm currently a client at the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. I receive six hours of intervention a week. Six hours is not enough to live independently. I have felt depression and loneliness for many years.

"My drive and ambition have faded a little each year. I have accepted the services provided for me and not fought for more. But over the last few years, after becoming a mother, I have realized I need to be the best that I can be for my children. I need to think of their needs as well. I can't expect them to be isolated inside our home with me. They need to be outside playing, socializing, and learning, just like other kids."

Marissa is not asking for anything unreasonable.

It is with human priorities like Marissa's in mind that I fully support the responsible initiatives that this government has made to reduce the deficit. Let us leave a financially solvent province to our children and work to make every penny provided by hard-working taxpayers count for tangible results. Let's make sure that we give people like Marissa the support that they need—now and in the future.

You have already heard me say in this House that a society or its government can only be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. I am proud to be a member of a government that ran on a platform that weighs the human costs in its decisions. I am proud to be a member of a government that considers the human factor and not the corporate ledger as paramount in its decision-making.

For eight years, the poor in this province have waited for a hike in the minimum wage. Now they will have it. For years, the disabled have been treated economically like second-class citizens in this province. No more. In London and Middlesex alone, there are over 4,000 people on waiting lists for subsidized housing. I am proud to be a member of a government that, along with our federal counterpart, is committed to building 20,000 units of

subsidized housing over the next four years. I believe the role of government is not just to be a regulating institution but to take responsibility and provide relief to those in our society who most need assistance.

People living with disabilities have been neglected by the provincial government for too long. We have a collective duty as human beings to provide for those who have little or no resource to provide for themselves. How can we neglect those who, through no fault of their own, cannot provide for themselves? We have a responsibility as a collective society. Let us live up to it.

The throne speech also made reference to many issues that I personally feel connected to. If I could define what issues I see as my priority as a member of this House, I would be correcting the problems in getting skilled immigrants accredited in this province, rebuilding and restoring faith in our education system, ensuring the best assistance possible to the disabled who have been sorely neglected, ensuring that our health care system remains public and help solve the shortage of family doctors in our province of Ontario.

The problems with degree accreditation and recognition of skilled labour go back many governments. Every party in this House has put forth legislation of some kind in an attempt to alleviate this issue. Furthermore, every party made campaign promises to deal with this issue. This gives me hope, since we all agree that accreditation must be dealt with. We must come together and solve this issue for both economic and human reasons.

The education system issue will be debated and discussed numerous times over the course of the parliamentary session. I firmly believe that education is an investment that is worth making, because every dollar effectively spent on education benefits the people and the economy of Ontario for years to come. We know two things about an educated population. First, we know that educated people can better compete in an international marketplace, and in order for Ontario's economy to thrive, it's workforce must be competitive. Secondly, an educated population is a healthier population. Education improves quality of life, and that is why we are here in this House. It is our solemn duty to improve the lives of people in this province. We will fulfill that duty in large measure by ensuring the provision of quality education for all citizens. In my riding of London-Fanshawe, there are far too many people without high school diplomas. Our government is committed to make changes to improve the quality and delivery of education in our province, and this is a welcome initiative.

Providing quality public health care is also on this government's agenda. We need to recruit and develop, as well as accredit, more doctors in this province to deal with a severe shortage of family physicians. London-Fanshawe desperately needs more family doctors. Several constituents have already contacted my office for help in finding a health care provider. Correcting the shortages will take some time and much effort. I'm proud to serve as a member of this government, a government



that is committed to addressing this problem and protecting the public nature of our health care system. Access to care is the right of every Ontarian. We cannot entrust health care to corporate interests where quality medicine comes second to the bottom line.

Health care, education and addressing human needs through a strong economy and social programs: I am proud to know that these are the priorities of the constituents in my riding, for the people of this entire province and for this government. Furthermore, I am proud that these priorities will be carried out with a strong sense of fiscal responsibility. I will work hard for the people of London-Fanshawe to ensure that these issues are addressed and to make sure that we see some tangible and positive results in our riding.

Like a family, we are all in this together. Those of us who come from big families know it can be trying, but there are few payoffs in life quite like it. It changes how you see things. Dalton McGuinty understands that. He is the eldest in the family of 10. I have confidence in his leadership, because I know he will remember those issues that are intrinsic to the well-being of families. I trust that he and all of us here will work toward creating a more responsible, gentle and compassionate government whose goal is to better the lives the people of this province.

I entered the realm of politics because I wanted to fight for those less fortunate than I. I have been lucky in my life, finding success in business after I moved to Canada. I have been healthy through my life. I chose to seek office because I believe it's the responsibility of every man and woman in this province to do what they can to help those around them. I ran for the Liberal Party because I believe our platform is the best means to that end.

I have been honoured and rewarded by the voters of London-Fanshawe. I didn't win because I am the smoothest speaker. I did not win because I came into the race with a massive war chest. I did not win because of my political experience. I won because the people of London-Fanshawe, indeed the people of Ontario, said it was time for a change. This change means doing the best for the greatest number. This change means listening and responding to the needs of those who have often gone unheard. This change is tempered with responsibility, but with compassion enough to care.

I pledge that I will work to my utmost to uphold this trust. I have not and I will not ever take it lightly.

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**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

Seeing none, I will ask for further debate.

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** Although I have already spoken on several occasions in this Legislature, this is my first official speech—my official maiden speech, in fact.

I would like to begin by thanking my constituents in Guelph-Wellington for selecting me as their member of provincial Parliament. I am honoured to have the opportunity to represent them. It has been both humbling and

daunting to take my place in the Legislature, not in one of the galleries for guests but in my seat on the floor of the Legislature at a well-aged desk that has been the workplace of many generations of legislators before me.

It has been awe-inspiring to glance up at the lovingly restored carvings and artwork that surround us, and it has been downright confusing at times trying to figure out what on earth is going on and why the bells are ringing yet again. However, we rookies are beginning to figure out the rules, and we have at least mastered the protocol on how to vote.

I would also like to thank all the volunteers who worked so very hard on my campaign. They were loyal, tireless, dedicated and very well organized. The work of the Liberal volunteers of Guelph-Wellington put me here, and I thank each and every one of them.

We started going door to door almost exactly a year before the eventual election date. We talked to a lot of people, particularly in the older part of Guelph. Voter after voter wanted to talk about Harry Worton and what a fine gentleman he was. Harry Worton served the people of Guelph and Wellington South as MPP for an astounding 30 years, from 1955 to 1985. When I was in elementary school, I learned that Harry Worton was the MPP. When my kids went to elementary school, they learned that Harry Worton was the MPP. In fact, I suspect that if Harry were still alive and still running, Harry would still be the MPP. Political party really had nothing to do with it. The people of Guelph elected as MP Alf Hales, who was a Conservative and a butcher, and for MPP they voted for Harry Worton, who was a Liberal and a baker. There is no record of the people of Guelph-Wellington ever voting for a candlestick maker to finish off the rhyme. However, even Harry admitted that when he was first elected as alderman in Guelph in 1944, at the age of 23, he was elected because he promised to put more raisins in his buns.

Harry served his entire 30 years as MPP in opposition. While the official record shows that he served as party whip and as critic for various ministries, Harry was primarily a constituency man. He believed his first job was to quietly help his constituents. As I knocked on doors, many voters were still recounting stories of how Harry had helped them.

Interestingly, Harry never had a constituency office. He worked out of an office in his basement, and his wife, Olive, answered the phone. The newspaper reports tell us that this was because he was being very frugal with taxpayers' money, and I'm sure that was partly true; however, I really think that Harry just thought that welcoming people into his home was much friendlier.

At his retirement dinner in 1985, former Ontario Premier Frank Miller told Harry, "At the end of 30 years, no one ever robbed you of your good name." Harry Worton was respected by all, constituents and colleagues, as an honourable man. For a rookie MPP like me, he left a towering reputation to live up to.

Harry was succeeded by Liberal Rick Ferraro, from 1985 to 1990. Rick served as Ontario's first small busi-



ness advocate and as parliamentary assistant in a variety of ministries. I find it particularly interesting that Rick was PA to the Honourable Mr Kwinter, who was then Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology. Coincidentally, I have also had the pleasure of being appointed as parliamentary assistant to Mr Kwinter, albeit now in the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

By another coincidence, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, where I have my office, is located in the Drew Building. George Drew was born in Guelph. Following a military career, Mr Drew returned to Guelph to become its mayor. Drew went on to be elected the Conservative Premier of Ontario from 1943 to 1948.

By reputation, position and location, I am surrounded by reminders of exemplary public service in Guelph-Wellington.

My riding, Guelph-Wellington, is centred in the historic city of Guelph, with one of the most attractive main streets in Ontario. Some early town council decreed the street would be four lanes wide plus parking, with all buildings faced with limestone. One suspects this was really some sort of early fire control measure, but the result a century and a half later is a very impressive public space.

Guelph is known internationally for its university. Guelph has long been the home of the Ontario Agricultural College; the Ontario Veterinary College, where my husband is on faculty; and the Macdonald Institute. It received its charter as an independent composite university in the early 1960s. I am proud that my father, Earl MacNaughton, is one of the academic leaders who built today's highly rated University of Guelph from the base of the three founding colleges.

Given its scientific expertise, Guelph is home to a growing cluster of agribusiness and biotechnology industries. Less well known is Guelph's role as a leading manufacturing community. In fact, our largest employment sector is auto parts manufacturing.

Guelph was founded by Scots in the early 1800s, welcomed a large number of Italian immigrants in the 1900s—our Minister of Finance's family, the Sorbara family, was among those immigrants to Guelph in the early 1900s—and today I represent citizens with over 200 ethnic origins. Our most recent immigrants represent over 40 ethnic origins, with the largest numbers arriving from East Asia and South Asia.

The Wellington part of my riding is composed of two municipalities, the township of Guelph-Eramosa and the township of Puslinch.

Guelph-Eramosa retains a largely rural character and includes the village of Rockwood. Last weekend, Rockwood hosted the very popular Farmer's Parade of Lights, a community Christmas parade with a twist. The floats are really farm implements decked out in Christmas lights. Speaker, I would have brought the pictures to demonstrate, but the Sergeant-at-Arms would have confiscated them.

Puslinch contains some of the most unusual geology in Ontario: drumlins poking out of wetlands and North America's largest kettle lake. On the surface, this produces beautiful scenery interspersed with gravel pits. Below the surface, this produces an extensive water generation system which supplies local industries like Aberfoyle Springs and Sleeman Breweries. Keeping this unique ecosystem in balance is one of the challenges for both local and provincial governments.

Why do I want to be here representing the wonderful people of Guelph-Wellington? I think our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, has captured it when he talks about the value of government. There are certain things for which the public believes the government is responsible and which they expect the government should do properly. The public has a right to expect quality health care in hospitals and in the community. Every child has the right to be educated to the best of their ability, regardless of race, religion or socio-economic background. People are entitled to clean air and safe water. It is reasonable to expect that when you flip the switch, the lights will come on. Quite frankly, the previous government was not delivering the services the public expects.

## 2100

As I went door to door over the past year, I heard countless stories of the failure of government. Let me tell you just one. I knocked on a door and young woman came, a few kids behind her. She told me she was separated, but in fairness to her ex-husband, he had been regularly paying support payments. She was attending nursing school—she had one semester left—because she wanted to become independent and be able to support herself in the future. Her husband had been laid off; he could no longer support her. So she had gone to Ontario Works and asked if they could help. They said, yes, she would qualify for Ontario Works, but in order to get support she had to quit her nursing program. She had one more semester to go, but she had to quit her nursing program. Ontario is short of nurses, but if the Tories were going to help her, she had to drop out. The people of Ontario deserve better government and, unlike the Tories, we are here to be the government.

As many of you know, my background is education. I served as a public school trustee for 15 years. However, what people generally don't know is that my academic training is in math and computer science.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I knew that.

**Mrs Sandals:** Did you know that? Very good.

I'm one of those odd people who actually look at numbers in the appendices of reports instead of stopping at the executive summary. Donna knows; she's been in meetings with me.

One of the reports which has fascinating background data is the 2001 report of the OECD, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, on international test results for 15-year-olds in reading, math and science. The popular press reported that Canadian students in general, and Ontario students as well, placed

quite favourably in the international rankings. This was interesting news in itself since the students tested were the leading edge of the double cohort, the last group studying the old curriculum. The report told us about our kids before the Tories fixed the curriculum and introduced private school funding. But the press didn't report on the background data, so I'd like to share it.

The OECD collected data on the socio-economic status of the students who wrote their tests. In all countries, not surprisingly, the socio-economic status of the family impacts student achievement. Rich kids do better than poor kids. However, Canada, along with Finland and Japan, has a shallow gradient. This means that the socio-economic status has less impact on the scores for Canadian students than in other countries. The numbers tell us that public education is working. Poor students in Canada have an opportunity to achieve academic success and improve their status. Egerton Ryerson, Ontario's founding father of public education, would be thrilled. His vision of bringing education to the masses to develop better citizens and build a better province lives on.

In contrast, the OECD report goes on to say, the impact of socio-economic status in the United States is about double that of Canada. There is much greater reliance on private education in the United States, with charter and voucher systems encouraging rich parents to abandon the public school system. Clearly, the US model is much less successful at closing the socio-economic gap than Canada's predominantly public education model.

What about comparing the performance of public schools and private schools to give parents choice, as the Conservatives would have it? In every country, private school students have higher raw scores than public school students. However, when one takes into account the impact of socio-economic status, there are two jurisdictions in the entire world where public school students outperform private school students: one is Alberta and the other is Ontario. When you remove the rich-kid

effect, Ontario's public school students scored better than our private school students. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that Ontario should rush to fund private schools. Public perceptions that private school kids do better than public school kids are simply not based on good data. So I'm delighted that the throne speech announced that our Liberal government will be ending private school funding. When we get to voting on third reading of the tax bill later this week, I will consider it sort of a personal Christmas present if it passes.

In conclusion, the throne speech outlines a vision for the revival of government in Ontario. Yes, we face challenges, but we also have a great opportunity to build the Ontario that people want. I'm excited to be a member of this Legislature. I'm excited to be part of the team that will face the challenges. I'm excited to have the opportunity to help create a better province for the citizens of Ontario.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Orders of the day?

**Hon Mr Peters:** I seek unanimous consent that, for the purposes of standing order 41, tonight's debate be considered one full sessional day.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is there unanimous agreement? Carried.

**Hon Mr Peters:** I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** All in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

*The House adjourned at 2107.*



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	<b>Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona</b> (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	<b>Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London North Centre / London Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London West / -Ouest	<b>Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher</b> (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
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Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	<b>Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S.</b> (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Elgin-Middlesex-London	<b>Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve</b> (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga East / -Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
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Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
		Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
		Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa South / -Sud	<b>McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L)</b> Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh Sudbury	Brownell, Jim (L)  <b>Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L)</b> Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	<b>Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L)</b> Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thornhill Thunder Bay-Atikokan Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord Timiskaming-Cochrane	Racco, Mario G. (L) Mauro, Bill (L) Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)		<b>Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L)</b> Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	<b>Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L)</b> Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parkdale-High Park	<b>Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L)</b> Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Toronto-Danforth Trinity-Spadina Vaughan-King-Aurora	Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND) <b>Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L)</b> Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
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Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	<b>Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L)</b> Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
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Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
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Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
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St Paul's	<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L)</b> Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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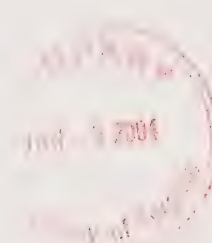
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of Ontario**First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament**Assemblée législative  
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of Debates  
(Hansard)****Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)****Wednesday 17 December 2003****Mercredi 17 décembre 2003**Speaker  
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L'honorable Alvin CurlingClerk  
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Just let me say that the bells are still not working properly, so therefore you won't see the flashing lights either. The only flashing lights we have today is the Sergeant at Arms's hat, which he has put away.

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### FESTIVAL OF NORTHERN LIGHTS

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** I rise in the House today to inform members about the 16th annual Festival of Northern Lights, which held its opening ceremonies on November 14 in Owen Sound. All the members—and anyone else in Canada, for that matter—who saw the front cover of December's *Municipal World* witnessed a small sample of the exhibit that we in Owen Sound are so lucky to take in each year.

Two years ago, Communities in Bloom, along with the Canadian Tourism Commission, launched the Winter Lights Celebration of Light and Life competition. I am very proud to say that in 2001 and 2002, Owen Sound was named national champion in the 20,000 to 50,000 population category. Judging has recently been conducted in our area for this year's competition, where Owen Sound will be competing in the national stars category against previous national champions with populations up to 750,000.

This event was the brainchild of Marie Walpole 16 years ago and it has developed into one of the most extensive and outstanding winter light shows and community events in the country.

The Festival of Northern Lights attracts over 20,000 people in our area each year. Visitors are treated to over 15 kilometres of lights, which illuminate the trees and exhibits along the banks of the Sydenham River, Harrison Park and the walkways around the festival's over 200 displays.

Thanks go out to this year's co-chairs, Mitch Childs and Marg Gaviller, and co-ordinator Karen Neerhof. I would also like to congratulate all of the community members: business owners, sponsors and countless volunteers who were involved in this year's event. I invite anyone who has the opportunity to travel to Owen Sound to take in this year's Festival of Northern Lights.

Again, Mr Speaker, it's on the front of *Municipal World*. We would certainly like you to come up and visit us again, as you have in the past, and anyone else here who would like to come up and see our lights. I hope that we can win this championship again.

#### OAKVILLE ASSEMBLY PLANT

**Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville):** I rise today to pay tribute to a proud member of the Oakville business community, Ford of Canada, and its employees: its management staff and the Canadian Auto Workers Local 707, who represent the bargaining unit in the Oakville assembly plant. Fifty years ago this year the first Ford vehicle rolled off the assembly line in the Oakville assembly plant. Construction had begun a year earlier in 1952, in a farm field in what was then Trafalgar township.

What many people don't realize is that Ontario is the second-largest automotive jurisdiction in all of North America, second only to Michigan. Each assembly line job is estimated to result in a spin-off of almost eight jobs in the local economy. That's how important the auto sector is to Ontario, and that's how important it is to my community of Oakville.

In 1904, Ford of Canada had a workforce of only 17 people and an annual payroll of \$12,000. Contrast that with today: The auto sector accounts for close to 20% of Ontario's manufacturing gross domestic product and directly employs 150,000 men and women.

In its first year of production in 1953 in Oakville, the Oakville assembly plant built 123,000 vehicles and employed 3,000 people. Since that opening year, Ford has gone on to build almost 10 million vehicles in Oakville. Current employment at the plant is about 3,400 people. Today the Oakville assembly plant sits on a 500-acre site and has close of 4 million square feet of buildings.

Automotive products are Canada's number one export, with exports topping over \$97 billion last year alone.

Since 1990, Ford has invested over \$9.5 billion in its Canadian vehicle assembly and engine plants.

#### YOUNG OFFENDERS

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** I want to take this opportunity to raise a public safety issue that should be of concern to all Ontarians.

Approximately two weeks ago the Minister of Children's Services dropped a little-noticed bombshell when



she quietly announced that young offenders' services in Ontario will be transferred to the children's ministry by the end of the year.

This revelation has been ignored by much of the Queen's Park press gallery, but clearly the general public, especially police and victims' organizations, need to know what is happening. Transferring responsibility for 16- and 17-year-old sexual predators and murderers to a children's ministry is both naive and dangerous. It is Liberal social engineering of the worst kind: playing with public safety. The reality is that many of these young offenders are vicious and unconscionable criminals. Treating them as children only re-victimizes the people who've suffered from their frequently horrific acts.

This initiative was not part of the Liberal election platform, nor in their throne speech. With the apparent acquiescence of the media, they are sneaking this risky plan through with absolutely no consultation.

I urge the Liberal government to step back and talk to front-line police officers, victims' organizations and others before moving ahead with this ill-thought-out plan.

#### DNA CLUSTER GROUP

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** Clusters have been lauded as the way of the future in economic regional development. I'd like to share with you an exciting new development in my riding.

The Peterborough DNA Cluster Project aims to advance the field of DNA and related research. It has been developed through a series of partnerships between the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corp, Trent University, Sir Sandford Fleming College, the Ministry of Natural Resources and a private sector group. Partnering through these private and public institutions will create a platform of unique enterprise. The organization is structured to accelerate time to market for inventions and reduce the risk of investment in new products and services.

The DNA cluster's areas of concentration will include the automation of a DNA sample collection, preparation and analysis; DNA profiling and bio-informatics; wildlife and commercial stock management through landscape genetics; and forensic science identification services for law enforcement.

A great aspect of this project is its ripple effect. The DNA cluster will benefit not only Peterborough riding, but will have lasting positive commercial outcomes both for Canada and around the globe.

1340

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I just want to respond briefly to the announcement made by the Minister of Education two weeks ago where, in one of those rare promises, he committed some money to educational purposes. I must admit it was a very good

promise, where he said that 112 million bucks will be devoted to literacy programs and English-as-a-second-language programs across the province—112 million bucks. Not bad. The Toronto board of education would get \$46 million, presumably to deliver literacy programs for students who are at risk, who have serious problems, inner-city kinds of needs, including ESL for many of our immigrant children.

The problem is that in Toronto, they probably will not be getting a cent to create ESL programs or inner-city literacy programs. The minister announced that \$46 million can be used to offset their deficit. That's a problem for me. This is a deficit brought upon the Toronto board by the former Conservative government, which created that deficit. We hoped the Minister of Education would wipe that deficit off and then commit the money, the \$46 million, for ESL and literacy, but they won't be spending one cent for desperately needed programs. Parents are hoping they're going to be able to use that money for that purpose, but they won't be, because it will be used to write down the deficit. We think that's a serious mistake.

#### ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to pay tribute to a young constituent of mine from Sarnia-Lambton who's truly an inspiration to us all. Khristopher is a 13-year-old Sarnia native who is presently waiting for a liver transplant, and he has a wish: to accomplish a 200-city-and-town walking tour across Canada to help save nearly 4,000 people who need organ and tissue transplants.

The walking tour begins next month in Sarnia, but before that, I'm proud to tell the House that Khristopher will be here at Queen's Park tomorrow, along with many supporters, for a pre-kickoff announcement. I want to take this opportunity to invite all the members to join us at this event tomorrow afternoon, and I want to remind all members and all Ontarians to show their support for this vital health care issue and consider filling out an organ donor card. I had the opportunity to distribute these cards to other members earlier this week, and am happy to sign one myself.

I'm proud of the amazing leadership that Khristopher is displaying on this issue, and I urge all members to show support for Khristopher's wish. I'm happy to wear the special Gift of Life pin, which my office has left in both the east and west lobbies today.

At this time, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent for all members to wear this special pin in support of Khristopher's wish.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Do we have unanimous consent to wear the Khristopher pin? There seems to be unanimous consent.

#### PLANNING LEGISLATION

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Just two days ago, the Minister of Municipal Affairs stood in this House and

announced changes to the Planning Act which he claims will give more powers to municipalities.

The people of Ontario deserve to know that this bill does not give more planning power to local councils; it gives the power to the cabinet and the Premier's office. The Liberals' proposed changes state that the minister can declare a provincial interest in matters before the Ontario Municipal Board. The bill then says that the final decision is made by cabinet.

They also say that no one can appeal a local decision to deny an amendment outside an urban settlement area to the OMB. However, the bill allows the government, by regulation, to alter the definition of an urban settlement area at any time. What does this mean? It means that all you have to do to amend an official plan is go to the OMB and then start lobbying the minister and the Premier's office for the decision you want. If you want to build outside an urban settlement area, all you need to do is lobby the government to alter the meaning of the words. This bill will trample the powers of local councils and put all decisions in the hands of the Premier's office and Liberal lobbyists.

#### OLDER ADULT CENTRE

**Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East):** Yesterday some of my colleagues and I had the great pleasure of attending the international Christmas luncheon in Mississauga. The event was hosted by the Older Adult Centre, the largest non-profit centre in Mississauga.

The Older Adult Centre consists of some 125 volunteers who work very hard, organizing daily educational and recreational events for adults 55 and over. Their hard work and dedication have resulted in a wonderful organization that assists many of our seniors. Over 1,400 individuals use the centre's services.

As I looked around the room, I was reminded of why Ontario is such a wonderful place to call home. The centre's members include people from all over the world: the Caribbean, China, Goa, Portugal, Poland, Spain and the Philippines, just to name a few. These people all shared something in common: first, they all chose to leave their homelands in search of a better place to live, a place to build a better life for themselves and their families, and they chose Ontario; second, they all share in the value and belief of multiculturalism. Our diversity is a tremendous source of strength in this province.

I left that event with a clear sense of what my role is as an MPP. It is up to me and the rest of my colleagues to ensure that their trust and faith in Ontario was not wrongly placed. We are and will remain a government that is honest, responsible, hard-working, innovative and committed to a bright future for all.

#### CITY OF KAWARTHA LAKES

**Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):** Mr Speaker, I rise today to bring forward an issue in this House that is of great concern to my riding. As I know

you are aware, the people of the city of Kawartha Lakes voted on November 10 in a minister-sponsored, non-binding referendum, with a result of 51% to 49% to de-amalgamate the city of Kawartha Lakes.

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** Whose side are you on?

**Ms Scott:** We're waiting for your answer.

Since the municipal election, the mayor and council have been attempting to communicate with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the ministry as well. I understand through the media that a meeting has been set up in Toronto between the minister, the mayor and the CEO of the city.

At a council meeting yesterday, a resolution was passed requesting the minister meet with the whole council and that the meeting be held in the city of Kawartha Lakes. As well, the mayor and council are hoping the minister brings forward a plan at the meeting in January on how to move forward on this important issue.

My constituents and I will be watching closely over the next few weeks to see what course of action the minister recommends.

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect to the last statement, I'd be more than willing to meet with the mayor and the members of council here in Toronto on January 4.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. I have something of great interest to you all.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I have had an opportunity to reflect on the submissions that were made yesterday concerning developments in the standing committee on finance and economic affairs in respect of its consideration of Bill 5, An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles and to provide for the review and regulation of risk classification systems and automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles.

While our practice is that matters that arise in committee should be considered in and disposed of by that committee, I appreciate that the matter before this particular committee and the committee proceeding itself were the subject of a December 4, 2003, order of the House.

The committee met on the morning of December 15, 2003. It convened again that afternoon, and in the course of that meeting it adjourned for lack of quorum. In reviewing the December 4, 2003, order of this House, I note that it directs the committee to meet for two days to consider Bill 5. I want to point out here that committee meeting days are differently defined and not necessarily equivalent to sessional days. In fact, in the next section of the House order, the permissive form "may" is used in setting out the times for the committee to meet. Thus,



meeting for any amount of time within the time frame established for those two days has the committee acting in compliance with the House order. That it did not meet yesterday afternoon does not detract from the fact that it met on that day.

Clearly, adjourning for lack of quorum was an unexpected and less than favourable outcome for this committee. It does not, however, in any way abrogate the motion passed by this House on December 4, 2003.

Having said that, I want to impress upon all members that committee work is a fundamentally important component of our parliamentary process. A working committee system affords an opportunity for members to become familiar with issues and to understand more fully the impact of proposed policy decisions. Perhaps more importantly, it provides an essential liaison between us in this place and the people we serve. All members should consider carefully their committee obligations and be vigilant about living up to them.

I wish to thank the members who spoke on this matter for their submissions.

**Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** I beg the Chair's indulgence on a point of order, Mr Speaker: A wonderful announcement took place in Hamilton today, historic in nature for Hamilton, Ontario and Canada. McMaster University was the recipient of a \$105-million—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure I can talk for 30 seconds about something wonderful in the riding of Timmins-James Bay, but I wouldn't use the standing orders to that event today.

*Interjections.*

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 5, An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles and to provide for the review and regulation of risk classification systems and automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles / *Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à geler temporairement les taux d'assurance-automobile dans les cas des voitures de tourisme et à prévoir l'examen et la réglementation des systèmes de classement des risques et des taux d'assurance-automobile les concernant.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour of the report, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise.

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Craiton, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise.

#### Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hampton, Howard	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Quellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Churley, Marilyn	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Eves, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 62; the nays are 26.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, December 4, 2003, the bill is ordered for third reading.

1400

## VISITORS

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wanted to introduce some very special guests who are visiting from my riding. In the members' gallery west: Mr Don McArthur, the mayor of the township of Schreiber; Mr Mike King, mayor of the township of Terrace Bay; Mr Richard Beare, the CAO of the township of Terrace Bay; Mr Kevin Bahm, the chair of the board at McCausland Hospital in Terrace Bay; Ms Susan Lubberdink, chair of fundraising for the long-term-care addition at McCausland Hospital, and Mr Mario Audet, the CEO of McCausland Hospital. Welcome.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INFORMATION  
PROTECTION ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Mr Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information / Projet de loi 31, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la protection des renseignements sur la santé.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Today's bill delivers on the principle of accountability. The Health Information Protection Act puts safeguards in place to protect patient information and make sure it's used properly and only by people who need to know it. With this bill, the people of Ontario will know how and when their health information is disclosed and when their consent is required to do so. This act would, for the first time ever in Ontario, establish consistent and comprehensive rules and safeguards.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The minister is giving a statement without the opposition having an opportunity to reply.

**The Speaker:** The member is just indicating a brief statement on his motion.

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** To conclude, this bill will establish consistent and comprehensive rules, safeguards and legal protection, governing the collection, use and sharing of health information. I've been working with my critics opposite. I've encouraged them that when this bill comes back, we hope they would have all-party support. When I say it comes back, it's because it will be referred to committee.

## NO HOG FACTORIES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 INTERDISANT LES  
PORCHERIES INDUSTRIELLES

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to restrict the operation of large hog farms and to amend the Nutrient Management Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 32, Loi visant à restreindre l'exploitation des grosses fermes porcines et à modifier la Loi de 2002 sur la gestion des éléments nutritifs.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have got it. Carried.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** This is the second time I've introduced this bill. What it does is put a moratorium on large hog farms, subject to the

ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make exemptions where it is appropriate to do so. The bill also amends the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, to provide that a regulation under the act only supersedes a municipal bylaw if the regulation provides greater environmental protection. I hope everybody will support this because we're finding more and more E coli and contamination of our waters.

## IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR  
DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day / Projet de loi 33, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine irlandais.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I'd like to thank my legislative intern, Chris Shantz, who has spent countless hours preparing the many bills and resolutions I've presented in the House. It's very clear that all cultures should be celebrated in Ontario. Irish immigrants were amongst the earliest settlers in Canada. In 1845, Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine in Ireland began settling in Ontario in large numbers. They brought to Ontario, and indeed Canada, their values of hard work, devotion to family, service to community and a perpetual hope for a better future for all. That tradition continues here today.

1410

ONTARIO DRINKING WATER SOURCE  
PROTECTION ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DES SOURCES D'EAU POTABLE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to protect sources of drinking water in Ontario / Projet de loi 34, Loi visant à protéger les sources d'eau potable en Ontario.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Last week I introduced a bill that dealt primarily with water taking; in fact, a bill formerly introduced by the present environment minister. This bill today deals more directly with a comprehensive framework for protecting water at its source. I won't go into the details here because I don't have time, but suffice it to say it provides the framework that this government is now consulting on. I believe if we pass this bill, we can move forward more quickly on protecting sources of water in this province, as outlined by Justice O'Connor in the Walkerton inquiry.



## VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** In the east gallery today there is a former Minister of Transportation and member for Scarborough East, Mr Ed Fulton. Would you all recognize him.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce, in the east gallery, a current member, Mr Arnott.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSESECONOMIC OUTLOOK  
AND FISCAL REVIEW  
PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES  
ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I rise today to present our government's economic outlook and fiscal review.

On October 2, the people of Ontario chose change. They chose a new government to deliver real, positive change, to grow our economy, deliver excellent public services and live within our means.

Il a choisi un nouveau gouvernement qui apportera des changements réels et positifs afin de relancer les croissances économiques, d'offrir d'excellents services publics et de faire en sorte que nous vivions selon nos moyens.

We are honoured by their choice and we will justify their trust.

When we were sworn in on October 23, we found that the financial circumstances of this province were far worse than the people of Ontario had been led to believe. It is these circumstances and our response to them that I am addressing today.

Immediately after the election, we asked former Provincial Auditor Erik Peters to give us the straight goods. He was asked to compare the province's 2003-04 budget, released in March, with our fiscal situation in October. He confirmed that Ontario could anticipate a deficit of \$5.6 billion in the current year, and he listed certain risks that could cost us another \$1 billion or more.

Since his report, two things have happened. On the one hand, some of those additional risks have come to pass. On the other hand, we have taken action to stop the erosion of our revenues and restrain our spending. These two factors have, frankly, offset one another.

Based on everything we know to this point, our updated fiscal forecast for 2003-04 is a deficit of \$5.6 billion. But this is not a one-year problem. We have a serious long-term problem. It's a problem rooted in a chronic mismatch of revenues and expenditures that has been growing over the past several years.

To be specific, over the past three years, program spending has grown by more than \$10 billion while tax

revenues have increased by only about \$500 million. In short, we have inherited a situation where the costs of running programs and paying interest on debt has been growing faster than revenues.

Even the positive impact of Bill 2, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2003, will not solve the problem. Without further action, without changing the way we do business and deliver programs, the province is on track to spend more than it takes in each year, every year.

Nous pourrions nous retrouver avec un déficit d'au moins 4,5 \$ milliards par année et chaque année.

We could face future deficits of at least \$4.5 billion a year, every year. This is what economists call a "structural deficit." It's what Ontarians call unacceptable, and it's what we call a challenge that simply must be met.

We have also identified other financial liabilities that have arisen over the past eight years, primarily within the broader public sector. These liabilities may add to the 2003-04 deficit, but were outside the scope of Erik Peters's mandate. They include: accumulated deficits in our hospitals and our children's aid societies; potential liabilities of the pension guarantee fund; and additional woes of Ontario Power Generation. These liabilities could reach \$2.2 billion. Further details on them are contained in the background document that accompanies this statement. We are reviewing them to determine how to deal with them responsibly.

Preliminary indications from OPG that have recently come to our attention suggest that there may be a substantial risk to its net revenue in the medium term. This risk could have a negative impact of \$250 million to \$900 million a year over our medium-term revenue outlook, between 2004-05 and 2006-07. We will be reviewing these potential impacts as more information becomes available.

In the background papers to this document we have included projections for each of the next three years. They describe the changes in spending that would be needed to reach a balanced budget by the end of each of the next three years. They do not represent options so much as the starting point for our consultations. For example, spending would have to decline in absolute terms by 2.3% from the levels currently projected for this year to balance by the end of the upcoming fiscal year. To get in the black by 2005-06, spending could increase by no more than 1.3% each year for the next two years. To balance by 2006-07, spending could only grow by an average of 2.3% each year for three years. Even this is far less than the 5% spending growth that has been the government average over the past five years. Clearly, we face some tough choices.

To be sure, we will not engage in the slash-and-burn, quick-fix approach that could endanger public services and indeed the economy itself. Frankly, Ontarians have had enough of that. Instead, we must begin the work of transforming government so that we can deliver high-quality public services on a sustainable basis.

While the finances we inherited are weak, our economy remains strong. Our workforce and businesses are

performing well. Despite setbacks like SARS, restricted border crossings, the blackout and mad cow disease, we're poised to achieve economic growth of 1.7% this year. Private sector forecasters agree that Ontario will rebound strongly next year and beyond. An average of their forecasts shows that real GDP growth accelerates to 3.1% next year and 3.6% the year after. These gains reflect the latest data showing a rapid turnaround in the economy of the United States, our largest trading partner.

1420

After almost no growth in the current year, our exports are expected to grow by 4.2% next year, and this despite our higher Canadian dollar.

We expect that by the end of this year, Ontario will have created 158,000 net new jobs, seen more than 84,000 new housing starts, and enjoyed a 3.8% rise in consumer spending.

While the increased value of our Canadian dollar has had an impact on exporters, it will also help our businesses by lowering the cost of investing in imported equipment and technology. These investments, in turn, will boost our productivity.

Our people and businesses have done their part. What they now need is a government that is willing to do its part, and we will.

Mr Speaker, we've already begun our work. We acted to immediately restore a fair and competitive tax system to Ontario with the introduction of Bill 2. It will provide very much needed revenues to support services that Ontarians depend on.

We maintained a hiring freeze in the Ontario public service while assuring those who work for this great province that strengthening public services is central to our mandate.

We raised the cap on electricity rates. It wasn't an easy thing to do, but it was the right thing to do. The subsidized rates will have cost close to \$1 billion by the end of the fiscal year.

We're improving transparency and accountability within the public sector. Our proposed changes to the Audit Act will allow—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Thank you, sir. I appreciate it.

Our proposed changes to the Audit Act would allow value-for-money audits of hospitals, school boards, long-term-care facilities, colleges and universities, Hydro One, and Ontario Power Generation. In the wake of the Epp report, we will ensure that the new leadership of Ontario Power Generation displays the openness and good governance that Ontarians have a right to expect.

We provided \$112 million in support of children who are struggling with their schoolwork.

We have increased the minimum wage to \$7.15 an hour effective February 1, the first increase in almost nine years.

We've moved to lower auto insurance rates and protect Ontario consumers.

We are, sir, fulfilling our commitments to the people of Ontario, and we will continue to do so.

I have described the financial challenges and the actions we have taken so far.

But there is much more to do, and we have a work plan to guide us through that work. Our plan consists of four major components: an unprecedented consultation with the people of Ontario, a broadly mandated period of restraint, a commitment to build on the new spirit of co-operation among all levels of government, and the redesign of many government services.

Let me begin with consultation. Our consultation with Ontarians is going to be comprehensive, intensive and inclusive. Only with their help can we ensure that the tough choices we face turn into the wise decisions that must be made. We believe that front-line workers in the public sector are in a unique position to know what works and what doesn't, both in their jobs and within their sectors as a whole. We want to hear from them. We know that business people bring an invaluable perspective to the table, from how to grow our economy to how to serve consumers. We want to hear from them. We want to hear from all Ontarians, from every walk of life, from every corner of the province, for they are the people that we are privileged to serve. On the Web and through citizens' juries and town halls, people will have their say about their services and the hard-earned dollars they want invested in those services.

The second element of our work is restraint. Restraint must be our watchword as we begin to redesign government. We're already paying more than \$10 billion a year in interest on our debt. That's more than we're spending in operating funding for our primary and secondary schools. So we're asking our partners in health care, in education and in the rest of the broader public sector to temper their requests for more. We're asking them to bring forward new ideas to ensure the long-term sustainability of public services that they work so hard to provide. I want to stress that this fiscal challenge is a threat to the services we're providing now, let alone to the improvements that we all want. But I also want to assure all Ontarians that while the fiscal challenge we face may change our timetable, it has not altered one iota our commitment to improve these public services.

The third element of our work plan is building on greater co-operation among all levels of government in Canada. From the recent Grey Cup summit to the creation of the Council of the Federation, there are positive signs that governments across the country are listening to each other and are ready to work together. We've already reached new and constructive agreements with the federal government on SARS relief, highway construction and agriculture. The recent joint greater Toronto area caucus meeting was another watershed where provincial, federal and municipal elected officials came together to talk about transit and affordable housing, the most urgent needs of Canada's largest urban area. The government will explore service integration opportunities with the federal and municipal govern-



ments in order to enhance service quality and delivery to citizens. Premier McGuinty will soon appoint John Milloy, his parliamentary assistant for intergovernmental affairs, to a special mandate to foster more constructive relationships between governments, and in particular with the federal government. We believe that governments work best when they work together.

The fourth element in our work plan is redesigning government. We must develop new ways to deliver better quality public services. This is more than a question of additional investment. More investment in public services is necessary, but that's not enough. We have to change the way governments work for people. In education, for example, we need stronger achievement in numeracy and literacy. We need to reduce health care waiting times. We need to improve our air quality. Money alone will not guarantee these outcomes; we need to change the system itself. We must be relentless in the pursuit of the best ideas, models and practices from around the world for delivering and sustaining high-quality public services.

Let me conclude by telling this House why all of this is so important. The deficit we have inherited threatens all that we want for Ontarians. Without a strong fiscal foundation, we cannot build a stronger Ontario. We will do what we must do, while always remembering that the people of Ontario didn't send us here to simply crunch numbers and defeat deficits. They sent us here with a greater mission: to strengthen our schools and our health care system, our cities and towns, the communities in which we build our businesses, celebrate our friendships and raise our families.

Les Ontariens et Ontariennes savent, et nous aussi, que la responsabilité financière est un moyen de parvenir à nos fins, c'est-à-dire de renforcer l'économie, bien entendu, mais avant tout d'assurer une bonne qualité de vie.

Together, we will get the numbers right. We will repair this balance sheet.

Nous redresserons le bilan de la province.

1430

We will strengthen our financial position and we will redesign government so that we can deliver the finest education, the best health care, the cleanest environment and the strongest communities so that we can, as the Premier has said, make Ontario the envy of the world.

**The Speaker:** Order. Responses?

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** We can now readily see why the government didn't need a lock-up to produce this statement. The reality is, to the Minister of Finance, you are creating a crisis in the finances of this province. You make John Snobelen look like a piker. This is absolutely ridiculous. What have you been doing for two months?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Could we give the leader of the official opposition a chance to respond?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is not fair. You are not being objective and fair with the opposition.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to put two minutes back on the clock for the Leader of the Opposition.

**The Speaker:** Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Mr Eves:** It raises the question of what the government has been doing for two months. You said, Mr Minister of Finance, after Mr Peters introduced his report, that you would be taking action upon it immediately. It would appear, quite frankly, that Paul Martin, the Prime Minister, has done more in 60 hours of being in government than you've done in 60 days of being in government in the province of Ontario.

There are a few problems with the Minister of Finance's numbers. Number one, he doesn't take into account the revenue projections that were in the very own public accounts of the Ministry of Finance that were adopted by the acting Provincial Auditor in this province and used by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—which were not available, quite frankly, to Mr Peters, with all due respect, when he did his report. That would account for an additional \$3 billion in this fiscal year in revenue.

It also doesn't take into account his own party's campaign commitment that they could find \$2 billion in savings in an instant to eliminate up to \$2 billion worth of debt. That leaves us with a projected debt, according to Mr Williamson, of no more than \$600 million in this fiscal year. If you take into account the \$771 million that Mr Manley has given to you, which even Mr Williamson has spread over three years—it's not on the PSAB accounting basis. You know the basic public accounting principles that every government in this country follows, and that is that you take into account the year in which the decision is made. Even Mr Manley agrees with that.

We talk about the amount that revenue has gone up. Revenue, in the province of Ontario, has gone up over \$17 billion on an annualized basis in the last eight years in this province. You don't mention that. There's a reason for that, and the reason is very simple. Because people have been allowed to keep more of their own money, there are more than 1,150,000 more people working in the province today than were working eight years ago. They're paying taxes. They're buying goods, commodities and services, and hence, increased revenue.

The Minister of Finance is complaining about how much the government is spending. I presume that he's aware that 48% of the government's operational budget this year is being spent on health care. Are you suggesting that we take money away from them? About 25% is being spent on education. Are you suggesting that we take money away from them? Where wouldn't you spend that \$10 billion that you're criticizing? Are you going to take it away from hospitals, schools, universities, community colleges? Where are you going to take it away from?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. When the minister was making his statement, I got a lot of co-operation from this side. I'm getting a lot of heckling on this side and I'm unable to hear the leader of the official opposition make his presentation.

**Mr Eves:** The government is going down a very risky road indeed when it starts to look at things like the capital expenditures of OPG and including the cost in that and operational funding. When it goes down the road of taking into account accumulated hospital debt in this province over many decades—we're not talking about this year's deficit, with all due respect; we're talking about the accumulated hospital debt in this province, which has been public knowledge. It isn't a big secret that the government made it out to be. It is revealed every year in the accounting statements of every single hospital in this province and always has been. So if you're going to start to include those, as well as the capital expenditures of OPG, as well as the debt of universities, colleges and municipalities, you can get this number up as high as you want. It can be \$12 billion, \$14 billion, \$19 billion, \$29 billion a year.

I say to you, what is that going to do to anybody's accountability in terms of managing their own affairs? What's it going to do to the credit rating of the province? It's not proper accounting. It may be convenient political accounting, but it's not the proper road to be going down. Why don't we just get to work, roll up our sleeves and manage the problem and solve it this year?

**Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: A group of grade 10 students from Markville Secondary School in Markham have just arrived. They are supervised—

**The Speaker:** Order. Would the member be seated, please? I have warned members before that this is not the way we do things, on a point of order, recognizing visitors in the gallery. We're just in the middle of a response from the third party. I'm going to recognize that, and not recognize this as a point of order.

1440

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I want to recognize a budget formula which seems to have become the style now, certainly of the Liberal Party in Ottawa and now of the Liberal Party in Ontario. The now Prime Minister made this budget style famous. You overestimate your expenditures. You underestimate your revenues. You say, "Oh, surprise, we've got a deficit," and then you use, "Oh, surprise, deficit," to justify breaking all your election promises. But because you've overestimated your expenditures and underestimated your revenues, two years down the line you suddenly move them closer together and say, "What a miracle. We've balance the budget."

This Minister of Finance and this government complain that the former government engaged in some budgetary sleight of hand. That may be true, but it is equally true that there is some budgetary sleight of hand in this budget. What this government has done, if you look at the debt costs, at the interest on debt costs, is

they've taken all the interest costs on Hydro's stranded debt, which used to be counted separately, and they've now suddenly brought it in and, hocus-pocus, their expenditure has gone up by \$3 billion.

What they haven't done at the same time is they haven't acknowledged that by now raising hydro rates from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour to 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour, that is going to bring in all kinds of new revenue. It's going to bring in new revenue that will enable OPG to pay its own debt servicing costs. So almost overnight they'll be able to say, "Look at that, \$3 billion has been paid down like that." All of a sudden a budget that was dressed up to look like an overwhelming deficit—the deficit disappears.

I want to say this is quite an amazing political exercise. It now allows the Minister of Finance to go to the colleges and say, "Oh, sorry, there's no money." It now allows them to go to the hospitals and say, "Nope, no money." It allows them to go to school boards and say, "No money." It allows them to go to cities you promised were going to get two cents of the gas tax and say, "No money."

How is this all being done behind the curtain? By, without announcing it, bringing in the interest costs and Hydro's stranded debt and for the first time counting it as public account debt cost, and at the same time, not giving recognition to the fact that by increasing hydro rates from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour to 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour, that's going to allow OPG to bring in all kinds of new revenue.

I wondered why over the last two weeks you went back and pounded away on OPG, pounded away on Ontario Power Generation. There should have been no surprise about Ontario Power Generation's current problems. We told you last spring the rate cap would cost OPG money. We told you last spring the debacle at Pickering would cost OPG money. So there should be no surprise at OPG's difficulties. What you've done is you've included hydro costs in your budget, but you haven't included hydro revenues, which are going to come from increasing the rates on hydro power. That is the sleight of hand that's going to happen here.

I know the member for Beaches-East York has some more points to make.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** They went from door to door promising a new deal for our cities, a new era for our cities. They promised to start sharing revenue with our cities. They promised two cents on the gas tax for every municipality in Ontario. They promised to start rebuilding the infrastructure of cities that are in decay, and many of them are very much in decay in this province. They promised money for transit. They promised to stop the downloading.

All that is happening today, in today's budget statement, is that all that is going to continue and we are going to see deficits rise, not only in the province but in all of the urban infrastructure of this province. There is nothing in this statement that offers any hope to our cities or to the people who live in them.



## ROBERT STANFIELD

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for comments from each of the parties with respect to the passing of Robert Stanfield. Up to five minutes, please?

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Do we have unanimous consent for a five-minute tribute with respect to the passing of the former leader of the Conservative Party? Agreed.

**Mr Jackson:** We thought, out of courtesy, we'd let the government go first, if you'd like to.

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** On behalf of the government, and on a personal basis, I would like to pay tribute to Robert Stanfield, who was described by many as the best Prime Minister Canada never had, and the reason was that he was a highly intelligent, very compassionate, very bright, progressive individual who, in an era when television became increasingly important in the field of politics, was not able to communicate his message as well as I'm sure he or his party would have liked. But behind his speaking style, behind his personal style was, as I say, a highly intelligent and compassionate individual.

When I heard the news on the radio, it was interesting—I just listened to my colleague the Minister of Energy, and he said, "You know, when I heard that Bob Stanfield died, I really felt bad about it," because he was a very distinguished Canadian, a very well-respected, a very loved Canadian, particularly in his native province of Nova Scotia and amongst members of the Progressive Conservative Party. What I recalled immediately when I heard it was a speech he had made on the final day, for him, of the Progressive Conservative convention, when they were choosing a new leader. It was an extremely compelling speech. I wish I had a copy of it today to share excerpts with members of this assembly. I remember being in a car at the time, listening to it and not turning the station, listening with a great deal of interest to the message he had for the Progressive Conservative Party at that time, and not only for the party, although it was primarily aimed at them, but for the nation. I'll tell you, his views were far-reaching. He knew where Canada was going. He had a love for his native Nova Scotia and for this country.

He was a highly intelligent man. When you hear a person speak slowly, sometimes you have a different impression. He said that himself. He said, "You know, when I was in Nova Scotia, nobody complained about it. I came to Ottawa, and they wanted me to speak so quickly." And yet his message was very good for this country.

He was a man of immense loyalty to his party and to his country. He was a man of immense integrity. What was said of him in terms of being a politician should be a compliment and should not denigrate his contribution to public life. It was said that he didn't have the thrust that you had to have in politics, that "going for the jugular" that it is said is required in politics, because on a number

of occasions when he could have taken some very drastic action against the government in power to further his own political ends, he didn't do so, because he was very much the gentleman and very much a person who believed in the integrity of politics.

It's most unfortunate that a person with those qualities is not a person who is recognized for the kind of leadership he could have provided for this country. It was a contrast, you will remember. I remember a photograph, that all of us remember, of Bob Stanfield stumbling when he was trying to catch a football. He fumbled the football. He had a grimace on his face. It looked as though he was completely a person who could not handle public life, because in those days, Pierre Trudeau was coming on the scene. He was seen as a dashing, athletic, bright new person on the scene, a charismatic person. And yet Bob Stanfield was every bit as capable an individual as any of the political leaders had been in that day. But the image did not necessarily fit the reality in that case.

So when we have a person of that kind passing on, I think we should reflect upon his life in a way which is extremely sympathetic.

## 1450

I want to choose one, because we are limited in what we can do. I want to choose what was said of him by an individual whose name is Jerome Barnum, a New York management consultant, who said Mr Stanfield was "perhaps the world's most well-rounded chief executive, exhibiting all of the behaviour characteristics leading to excellence in management. Mr Stanfield has the intellectual flexibility of an Adlai Stevenson, the human warmth of a John F. Kennedy and the organized preciseness of a Herbert Hoover."

All of those were Americans, but it was an American making a pronouncement about a Canadian who not only to Canada, but on an international basis, made a wonderful contribution. Our country is better because of Robert Stanfield and his contribution to Canadians from coast to coast.

**Mr Jackson:** It's a great honour for me to rise on this solemn occasion to say a few words on behalf of the life of Robert Stanfield.

As my colleague from St Catharines has indicated, it has been oft times stated that Bob Stanfield was probably the finest Prime Minister Canada never had. He will indeed be remembered for that, and there is much about this man's long and distinguished career that needs to be briefly annotated today.

I have not only had the privilege of supporting Bob Stanfield, but I had the privilege of working for Bob Stanfield. Like my colleague from St Catharines, we began our political involvement as very, very young teenagers, and I was there when Bob Stanfield produced the glass of milk and the banana on television. My colleague opposite will remember that, not to be outdone, a very close friend of his, the late Mr Greene, produced an apple and orange juice for national television in the hopes that he could emulate Bob's success on television.

As has been stated, it was a momentary success, because with the flood that was produced with Trudeau-mania, poor Bob's intellect and compassion were overshadowed by the excitement that the media had engaged in having a truly media-savvy leader of a political party in Pierre Trudeau. That juxtaposing of two styles and two approaches to politics seemed to have not only haunted Bob Stanfield all of his life, but it also underscored the depth and quality of this man.

There is something that I didn't find when I was reading today, but it's a piece of his personal history that I'm aware of that many people are not. Bob Stanfield was the first and only non-American to be the editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. This was a distinguished—he was very modest about it, but the Americans were so overwhelmed by the man's capacity and his intellect and his legal mind that he was awarded this great honour, which has not been replicated since. I think that's a tribute to our nation that we produce the Ramsay Clarks and the Bob Stanfields of the world by whom the Americans are continually impressed.

I may be one of the few people who can say that in 1968, I had a Bob Stanfield sign for my parents' lawn and I refused to come into the house until they let me put it up. That was the only lawn sign for Bob Stanfield on our street at the time, but I will say this: I remember occasion after occasion when my neighbours who had Trudeau signs would come up to me and say, "You know, Cam, we wish we had taken the sign when you knocked on our door," because, as we know, in 1974, Bob spoke about wage and price controls and he was mocked by Trudeau, and Trudeau then came in and implemented them. Bob was and will be remembered as someone who said it as it would be. He was very straightforward with the public in these matters.

Again, I can say, I remember—mind you, at the time, I was working for him on the national executive—he phoned me up. He wanted to visit Burlington and he asked me if I would introduce him to my student council during an assembly. It was a great honour for me as a young high school student. That was the kind of detail that Bob Stanfield felt about people.

I will remember an episode—I'm sure every member of this House will—when Bob was tested. It was quite common for the Liberals of the day, whenever their popularity got low, to pick one or two subjects off the shelf and throw them out there on to the table for the media to play with. One of those, of course, was official bilingualism and the Leonard Jones affair. That was a test for Bob Stanfield. It put him at odds with a large number of people at that time in our party. Yet Bob had a very deep conviction about what it meant to be a Canadian and how inclusive his political party was going to be under his leadership. He paid a political price for that, but he was able to be at peace with himself his whole life that he never let his country down as a true Canadian.

Ladies and gentlemen and members of the House, we all share in the loss of this great Canadian. Our condolences and our hearts go out to his four children, and to

his wife, Anne, who was from Toronto, and many of us know her. This is a difficult time for Nova Scotians as well, who are mourning a great leader and a great Nova Scotian.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On behalf of New Democrats, I want to extend our condolences to the Stanfield family and also to the extended family, all of those many people who came into contact with Mr Stanfield over his many years in politics.

There are few Canadians who can actually be attributed to as being one of those Canadians who served in politics who can be best remembered as a person like Robert Stanfield. We think of certain members of the opposition as leaders, we think of certain Prime Ministers at the federal level and the provincial level, who were able to rise to the occasion, who at a time in their political career decided to run for office to become leaders of their party and, once there, served with distinction and really carved a special place for themselves in our hearts and minds, no matter what side of the issue you happened to find yourself on.

I remember in the 1970s—I don't remember exactly which election, but in the mid or early 1970s—there was a campaign on when we were in the midst of a very tough economic situation in Canada, with inflation running out of control. Mr Stanfield, if we all remember well, was the one who put forward the whole idea of wage and price controls. In that whole campaign, as I remember it, as a young person first being involved in politics, that was the issue we were out campaigning on. I, as a New Democrat for Mr Tommy Douglas, and others in this House for various leaders of parties campaigned against the very idea of wage and price controls.

The point I want to make this: It took a lot of guts for a Canadian leader of a party such as the Tories, who were contending for government, to say to Canadians, "We need to deal with some tough medicine and we've got to deal with that now or else our economy is not going to flourish the way it needs to." Mr Stanfield, with a lot of courage, went through that whole campaign on the issue of wage and prices controls and, if you remember, on the issue of raising the gas tax we pay for our cars. I remember well the debate on CBC Radio—oh, the CBC radio of the past—with Monsieur Stanfield and Monsieur Caouette. It was quite a debate. I remember at the time that his idea was rejected.

Interestingly enough, the idea had its day because even though the Liberals at the time, under Mr Trudeau, campaigned in opposition to wage and price controls, the Liberals, as they are, adopted the idea of wage and price controls, including the gas tax, and called it their own, which was an idea Mr Stanfield had put forward.

It's not a partisan comment. I'm just saying that every now and then in politics people bring forward ideas and those ideas are adopted by others, and I think to a certain extent that can attest to the thoughtfulness and creativity of Mr Stanfield.

I also want to say that Mr Stanfield suffered, as some of us in politics and as leaders suffer, in that he really had



a bit of a difficult time dealing with the media. I remember a number of occasions where he didn't have his best day in pictures that were taken of him, at football games—Mr Bradley earlier talked about the picture of him stumbling with the football, but many people remember the picture of the banana. A picture had been taken of Mr Stanfield while eating a banana at a football game, and the connotation was that he wasn't up to the job.

It was quite unfortunate, because even though I never voted for Mr Stanfield, I think that he, as a leader, emulated what all leaders should be able to strive for, and that is to have the courage of your convictions; even though at times you may be in a position where you might feel as if you're pushing forward a minority view, to stick to those issues and push them as far as you can in order to be able to have those ideas go forward and be adopted.

1500

I know that the family is obviously going to miss him. I also want to say, as Canadians there are few people who go through politics whom we can all claim to have known at one time. I just say that Canada was made a much better place because of the participation of Mr Stanfield in his many years in federal politics. He will not only be missed by his family, he will not only be missed by the extended family of Nova Scotians, but by all Canadians who truly benefited from his time in federal politics and the contributions he made.

**The Speaker:** Of course, those comments and words of tribute on the passing of this great Canadian will be made available to the family.

## LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** With us today in the Speakers' gallery are the 2003-04 interns of the parliamentary internship program in Ottawa. They are Simon Bailey, Shantona Chaudhury, Clare Demerse, Jeremy Geddert, Andrew MacDonald, Chi Nguyen, Cloë Rowbotham, David Sandomierski, Adam Waiser and Eli Walker. Would all members join me in welcoming our interns.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### TAXATION

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Premier, you were quoted on your way into cabinet this morning, when asked by one Graham Richardson, "Is cancelling a tax credit a tax hike—yes or no?" and you responded by saying, "I'm going to be doing that this afternoon." Could you now tell us whether cancelling a tax credit is a tax hike or not?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question.

What we're conveying to the public today by means of this economic statement is that while we find ourselves in difficult economic circumstances, we have done three things which I think give expression to very strong leadership. First, we're giving people the straight goods. We're telling them exactly about the situation as we find it. Second, we have taken immediate steps to address the mess left to us by the previous government, and I fully expect we'll have the support with respect to Bill 2, which will be coming up shortly in this House. Finally, we insist on moving forward together with Ontarians. We're going to enlist them in the cause to address this deficit, to redesign government and to restore faith in much better-quality public services.

**Mr Eves:** I don't believe we received an answer as to whether the Premier now considers cancelling a tax credit to be a tax hike or not.

I also understand that you are now not delivering on your gasoline tax commitment to public transit. Will you stand in your place and admit there was no way you could deliver on that commitment in the first place?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** We look forward to delivering on that commitment.

As I said in a scrum earlier today, I would love today, in the spirit of the season, to be able to run around the province and hand out cheques, but that would be irresponsible. We believe we have to bring a responsible approach to the financial disaster that was left to the people of Ontario by the previous government. We look forward to working with our communities. We look forward to putting them on a sustainable footing.

I had yet another very good meeting with another representative of a city yesterday: I met with the mayor of Hamilton. I will continue to meet with mayors across the province. We will work together to improve their lot as we improve our lot.

**Mr Eves:** Speaking about a responsible approach, I say to the Premier, in the Minister of Finance's statement this afternoon he talks about your work plan, and he talks about going around and putting in this year's fiscal deficit of the province the accumulated debt of hospitals and, I presume, other public institutions in the province for decades.

I believe I heard the Minister of Finance say in his statement today that the Provincial Auditor thought this was the right thing to do. How come the Provincial Auditor has not done that in every single set of public accounts that he has introduced in the province's history?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say again, notwithstanding what the Leader of the Opposition is saying, I don't believe ordinary Ontarians understand that we have an accumulated deficit in our hospitals to the tune of some \$1 billion. I don't think they know that. We feel a responsibility to share that with them. We feel a responsibility to tackle that and to tackle it head-on.

They may not feel the people of Ontario can cope with that kind of information. We believe the people of Ontario are smart and resourceful. We intend to call upon the best they have to offer, and we intend to work together to tackle this deficit and improve their public services.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, this type of fiscal gymnastics is an embarrassment to you and it's an embarrassment to your government. You've set aside the professionalism that was known around North America as the hallmark of the Ontario Ministry of Finance. You had your spin doctors take over the ministry. Let's be very clear. This document was not written by you. It was written by your spin doctors, your negative campaigners, people like Warren Kinsella. Can you name me one single person who is neither employed by the Liberal Party nor has a Liberal membership card who would honestly say you're making an honest effort to even try and balance the budget this year? Can you name me one single person?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** It's clear to me that my friend from Nepean-Carleton hasn't had the benefit of reviewing the material and didn't give us the courtesy of listening to the speech. The work in that speech and the numbers we presented with it are the result of the work of officials in the Ministry of Finance who have been working with this problem for years and years. The good news, and they should be celebrating it, is that for the first time in a long time we are casting back the curtains and letting the full light of day shine on the real circumstances this province finds itself in. I'll tell you, sir, that's the only way we can get on with the very tough job of building a strong financial foundation and, in doing so, repairing public services.

**Mr Baird:** I do underline the fact that you couldn't stand in your place and name a single person who believes you're making an honest effort to balance the budget, and I think that's quite telling.

You promised to balance the budget, you promised not to raise taxes and you and your government have broken that promise. Page 60 of your report is perhaps the most outrageous. Major changes from the Peters report: \$300 million of SARS costs, which was booked by cabinet in July from the contingency fund, and just to make the former government look bad, you put it again. Again, in this budget, just to get to the \$5.6-billion deficit, you've established yet another contingency fund. That's in addition to the \$1 billion you set aside as your Liberal economic plan. That's in addition to the \$2 billion you set aside to help balance the budget this year. You've gone further. You've set up a \$600-million slush fund.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Baird:** When are you going to stop vilifying the former government, go to work and at least make an

honest attempt to balance the budget in Ontario this year, just as you promised to do?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I don't need to spend any time vilifying the former government. Your record stands as your record, and that record was considered and rejected on October 2.

Within days of being sworn in, we introduced a bill, Bill 2, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, to start to repair some of the revenue damage. My friend from Nepean-Carleton has not had the courtesy to stand up and vote for that bill and say it's a good idea; it is. We've started our work. We're going to continue our work. We're going to get this province on a strong financial footing.

**The Speaker:** Final supplementary.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** To the Minister of Finance: I have a note here. It's from Santa Claus. He's presenting you with a lump of coal for the work you've just presented.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Will you allow the member to ask his question, please.

1510

**Mr Klees:** From Santa Claus to the Minister of Finance: "You'll be getting a lump of coal for the work you've just done."

Can the Minister of Finance tell us, now that he has this economic statement out, whether he has in fact given instructions to his ministers to now go to work and bring in, by the end of this fiscal year, a balanced budget? Can he tell me if he at least has asked them to make an effort to do that?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I look forward, sir, to the lump of coal. I thought perhaps my friend from Oak Ridges was going to send one over. I get the same questions from my friend from Oak Ridges every day about what I have told my colleague ministers. Every day I give the same answer: I do not discuss in this Parliament or publicly the discussions that my colleagues and I have in cabinet. I simply say that we have now taken a very important step with this economic statement. We've set out the starting point. We've set out a work plan. We are determined to get this province back to a sound and strong balance sheet.

If my friend wants to send over a lump of coal to help in that regard, I'd be delighted to accept it.

## PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Before the election, your then finance critic referred to the risk of a \$5-billion deficit. In August, Mr Kwinter and other of your members referred to the risk of a \$5-billion deficit. You knew there was a deficit. Despite your knowledge of that, you made a promise to cities that they were going to get two cents a litre of the gas tax. You said, "We will give two cents per litre of the gasoline tax to municipalities for public transit." Now you and your government pretend you're surprised that there's a \$5-billion deficit, and you use



your surprise to say, "Oh, I guess we can't keep our commitment to the municipalities." You knew about the risk of a \$5-billion deficit when you made the promise. What's changed?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I'm pleased to receive a question from the leader of the NDP. Let me say that we look forward to delivering on that promise, as on many other of our promises. We've already delivered on so many of them within a short period of some 55 days.

Let me put it in a different light. I am not going to do what the NDP did when they formed the government. I'm not going to try to spend my way out of this problem. We're going to bring a responsible approach to dealing with the government's finances. We're going to sit down with our municipal partners and work together. We're bringing something to the table that has been lacking for eight and a half years, and that is goodwill. We're not going to pretend that we can sprinkle the province with gifts. We're not going to do that. The fact of the matter is, we've been saddled, all of us, with a \$5.6-billion deficit. It's time for the members opposite to get real. We have a serious matter before us. We're going to treat it seriously. We're going to sit down with our municipal partners, and we're going to work out a plan to put them on a sustainable footing.

**Mr Hampton:** You knew there was a \$5-billion risk before the election. That didn't stop you from sprinkling all kinds of goodies. That didn't stop you from going to municipalities and saying, "Public transit can't wait. Public transit is too important to getting rid of gridlock. It's too important to improving the quality of our air." Now, all we've had confirmed is, yes, there's a \$5-billion deficit, the same \$5 billion you referred to before the election. But suddenly public transit can wait. Suddenly it's not important any more. Tell us, what's changed? Your finance critic knew there was a deficit; the Fraser Institute knew there was a \$5-billion deficit. What's changed, or is it just that you never intended to keep those promises in the first place?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** What's changed is that there's a responsible government on the job. We have a \$5.6-billion deficit. We're not going to pretend it doesn't exist. I again say to the leader of the NDP that we're not going to bring the approach in government that he brought as part of his government. We're not going to try to spend our way out of a deficit. I want to remind the members that this former government quadrupled the deficit to over \$12 billion. They doubled the accumulated debt. There was an average of 1,000 people joining the ranks of the unemployed each and every week over the five years that they, the NDP, were in power. We do not want to revisit those dark and desperate times. We're going to take the tough decisions. We're going to deal with this deficit in a responsible way.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question.

**Mr Hampton:** I swear I heard Ernie Eves give that same speech here in the Legislature eight years ago. I think, Ernie, you should claim copyright here, because

it's the same speech the Conservatives used to give. Premier, what you're doing is this: You're defending all the tax cuts the Conservatives put in place. You're telling people that it's more important for your government to keep all those tax cuts that the Conservatives put in place that we know are not sustainable. Before the election, you were singing a different tune. Before the election, you said that you were going to hire 8,000 nurses. You said that health care can't wait. Now all of a sudden it seems to be that health care can wait because it's more important to recite Ernie Eves's speeches. Can you tell me how this magical change happened, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I think one of the most shocking changes in this Legislature has been the fact that the NDP now stands in support of public funding for private schools. I think that's the most shocking change that we've experienced in this Legislature. I want to remind them. They voted against our Bill 2, and I want to give the members opposite and the public at large another opportunity to understand exactly the aggressive steps that we have taken. With respect to Bill 2, we have rolled back the latest portion of the tax giveaway to large corporations. We've eliminated the seniors' education property tax credit. We are trying to eliminate the tax giveaway to private schools. We do that and many other things inside Bill 2, and I ask the member opposite to lend us his support so that we can begin to crack down on this deficit.

**Mr Hampton:** The Premier wants people to pat him on the back for not implementing tax cuts that the Conservatives were going to implement. Meanwhile, you keep in place 90% of the unsustainable tax cuts that the Conservatives already put in place. You know and I know that that is what is putting health care in a desperate situation. That is what is putting education in a desperate situation. That's why you say you can't come up with the money for protecting the environment. I'm simply saying to you, Premier, that before the election you said health care was too important. You said health care couldn't wait. You said educating our children couldn't wait. Why is it that now, after the election, you sound so much like Ernie Eves?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** You know, some things just never change. The NDP believe that we should either—in fact they believe both. They believe that we should be trying to spend our way out of this \$5.6-billion deficit and/or that we should try to tax our way out of this \$5.6-billion deficit. I just don't believe that Ontario families should have to pay the price for the irresponsibility shown to us by the former Tory government. I'm not prepared to encumber them with further taxes.

What I can say is that we are treating this matter very seriously. There is a \$5.6-billion deficit that is now saddling Ontario families as a result of the irresponsible approach brought by the Tories. I can tell you this, Speaker: We look forward to addressing this challenge. We look forward to redesigning government. We look forward to improving public services, and I'm talking about better schools for our children, better health care

for all our families, cleaner air, safer drinking water and stronger communities. That's what we stand for.

1520

### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is to the Minister of Finance. With great fanfare last week, your government introduced legislation that said you were going to be holier than thou and you would not engage in partisan political advertising with taxpayers' dollars. Today you've had your spin doctors work with professional public servants at the Ministry of Finance, and you've conscripted them into partisan activities.

You recently released this red, taxpayer-funded, taxpayer-supported CD to the press gallery—I know the Sergeant at Arms will want to look at it and take it as exhibit A. You've used partisan advertising to spoon-feed the press gallery, using professional public servants.

I want you to stand in your place and tell us how you can justify this outrageous partisan activity—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Baird:** —where you are seeking to vilify the former government, and tell us how much money was spent on the production and distribution of this partisan piece.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I can't believe the member from Nepean-Carleton. I can't believe that.

**Interjection:** It was \$400 million.

**The Speaker:** I'm willing to allow them to ask you questions, because it seems I keep getting interruptions from this side. Please.

The Minister of Finance.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** He was part of a government that spent \$400 million on those glossy things that used to come in the mail with the Premier's picture and the minister's picture and a little statement about how wonderful education was in Ontario as school budgets were being cut, as health care was being cut, as water inspectors were being fired. And now he has the audacity to suggest that CD-ROM technology—have him look in the book. There's no picture. There's nothing. There's my name on the bottom of the document, and I stand by it. For him to suggest that a CD-ROM communicating this material is somehow partisan just goes to show how deeply rooted they were in all that muck.

**Mr Baird:** The minister may be interested to know that the CD-ROM doesn't contain information on the financial statement he presented in the House. What it does seek to do is use taxpayer dollars in a partisan way to conscript the public service into your political dirty tricks and to vilify the former government. That's what the CD does. Had that CD and that electronic advertisement been brought in by the previous government, you and your party would have stood and cried bloody murder.

Paul Martin, in just four days in office, has done more to bring in line the budgetary situation in Ottawa than

you've done in more than nine weeks. Would you stand in your place and tell us you will stop these negative ads, that you will stop this negative conscription of the public service into demonizing the former government? Will you do that, Minister?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Somebody send him over a Valium.

Let's be serious about this for a minute. The Ontario public service, including the thousands of officials who work in the Ministry of Finance, have been slandered by the remarks of my friend, and I invite him to withdraw those remarks. They served you professionally, and they serve us professionally.

There's only one thing that's negative. It's the negative number. It's the deficit number that party left when they left government. That's what we are going to fix, and that was the subject of my statement today.

**Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Under the standing orders, I register my disapproval of the response and ask for a late show. But I haven't got a response from this minister in more than four weeks.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I'm sure you'll supply us with the necessary paperwork for that late show.

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** My question is to the Minister of Health. There are currently over 60 alternate-level-of-care patients at Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, many of whom should be receiving care in long-term-care facilities. As a result of this, patients looking for acute care are often being shuffled around the health care system, as beds that would be regularly meant for acute care are being used for long-term-care patients who cannot be accommodated anywhere else. I know you'd agree that this is wrong. Not only is it bad for the patients getting turned away due to a lack of available beds, but it's also distinctly unfair to those who should be in long-term-care facilities who require other levels of care, such as rehabilitation or home care.

This situation will only get worse when Thunder Bay Regional opens its new hospital with even fewer acute care beds available. My constituents are looking for an immediate solution to this problem. My question to you is, what are your plans to improve patient care in our community, and when can we expect to see some action?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The issue that the member from Thunder Bay raises is an important one all around our province. We're suffering particular challenges at the moment in the Thunder Bay community, where a shortage of long-term-care beds is meaning that there are a lot of alternate-level-of-care patients who are blocking beds in acute care settings, which is causing a series of concerns and havoc around surgeries and the like.

My ministry is working aggressively on a plan that will have short-, medium- and long-term solutions to



address the challenges in Thunder Bay and other communities in the north and around our province. I expect to be in a position shortly to offer some hope to the community of Thunder Bay, again both on a short-term and a long-term basis.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Supplementary.

**Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** It's important to remember that this is just an interim solution to a much bigger and far-reaching problem. There's no question that more beds are helpful, but moving people from one place to another does not guarantee them the care they need. What we really need in the Thunder Bay district is a long-term plan to deal with this issue. How do we intend to address this in the longer term?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** To the other member from Thunder Bay, I acknowledged in my first response that we've got a challenge here which is both short-term and long-term in nature. One of the opportunities that we have, and that I've asked my deputy to pursue on a hurry-up basis, is to find beds that might be available in some areas of the province that are overserviced, with a look toward distributing those to the areas and regions in our province which are suffering from the most acute problems.

I offer to the members from Thunder Bay my word that I'll be working with them to address this problem and that they should expect to see action from the government on this matter in the very short term, recognizing, of course, that with the opening of the new hospital in Thunder Bay in February, which is the consolidation of two hospitals, we'll have even fewer beds in Thunder Bay, making the need to deal with this quickly even more urgent. It will get the kind of urgent attention that it deserves.

## PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Your finance minister today and your Premier have both indicated how important it is for you to provide the straight goods. I would say to you, Minister, you have not provided the straight goods when it comes to Bill 8. You introduced the bill with a headline on a news release that said, "McGuinty government moves to outlaw two-tier health care in Ontario. New bill would stop creeping privatization of health care."

*Applause.*

**Mrs Witmer:** You can applaud all you want, because that convinces me that just like the minister, you have no idea what is contained within this bill.

What you failed to tell the people and how you failed to deliver the straight goods is the fact that this Bill 8 made fundamental changes to the privacy rights of patients. It put you above the law. It gave you unfettered access to privacy information. Will you acknowledge today that the bill was poorly drafted? It gave you an unprecedented right to collect, use and disclose the personal information of any patient in this province, and

you've acknowledged that today by introducing another privacy bill.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the honourable member. The fact of the matter is that a bill like this is necessary for the fear that a government like yours should ever be the government in Ontario again. This is a bill that is designed to protect and respect the principles that Ontarians believe in, which is public health care.

1530

On the matter of privacy, today I introduced a piece of privacy legislation, long overdue because you didn't get it done; let's face that fact. I'm very pleased to report to that member and to all members of the House that the piece of health privacy legislation that I introduced today, and that I recommend to them for their consideration and for their input, states in unequivocal terms that the supremacy of the law with respect to privacy of information is to be found in that bill. Furthermore, Madame member—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** It was a long time.

Furthermore, I give you this undertaking. It's one I've delivered to you personally. It is that with respect to both these pieces of legislation, I've asked very personally for your input. I'm awaiting it, and I will endeavour to work with you to improve these bills in ways that you find satisfactory as well.

**Mrs Witmer:** The acknowledgement of the minister today is an admission that he recognized that Bill 8 was poorly drafted, that it did constitute fundamental breaches of privacy rights and that it should be withdrawn. I'm glad you've done the right thing, but I would say to you now, will you commit to immediately withdrawing the privacy provisions within Bill 8, now that you've acknowledged that you didn't understand what was in that bill?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** The member tries a little hard to impugn what I just said in my earlier answer. I made no such acknowledgement that you speak of. What I very clearly said, and what I'll repeat even more slowly this time for your benefit, is that of the two pieces of legislation, the privacy legislation that I introduced today has supremacy, and unlike your Bill 159, which starts a very long section under the title "Disclosure to Minister," you'll find no such references in the pieces of legislation that are before the House. So the piece of legislation that I introduced today clearly sends the message to Ontarians that the privacy of their personal health information is of paramountcy to this government. We offer further protection to them by making sure that the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who works for this Legislature and its members and the people of Ontario, will play the role of making sure that Ontarians have confidence that their health privacy is being protected. That's our guarantee.

## YOUNG WORKERS' SAFETY

**Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale):** My question is for the Minister of Labour. Too many younger workers in Ontario are injured or killed in the workplace. Workers under the age of 25 are at the highest risk of workplace injury. In one year alone, 14 young workers were killed, 12 of them at small employers with less than 20 employees. In that same year, 254 young workers had a body part torn or cut off. This tragedy needs special attention. What action is your ministry taking to protect younger workers from injury or death at the workplace?

**Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour):** I'd like to thank the member for Willowdale for his question and for his concern about young worker safety. It's too bad some of the members opposite aren't as concerned, because it's a matter of great concern to this government.

I'd like to tell the honourable member of one of the initiatives we're taking. Young workers are particularly vulnerable to workplace accidents because of their inexperience and their lack of training. The passport to safety program is an initiative designed to address the vulnerability of young workers. What it is, is a program designed to give young workers basic awareness in health and safety issues, basic training, so that they will be more amenable to the job-specific workplace training provided by their employers. This will help to address the vulnerability of those workers to workplace accidents.

**Mr Zimmer:** Minister, too many people starting out in a workplace, particularly younger workers, just don't know their rights. They don't know that they can in fact refuse a job if the site is unsafe. They don't know that they have a right to know what hazards are at the work site. They don't know that they have a right to participate in worker safety programs.

The passport to safety program will help younger people to know their rights and obligations at the earliest time on the job site, but when will this program be available? When will the program be up and running?

**Hon Mr Bentley:** Once again, I thank the member for his question. It's an excellent question and a timely one, because this past summer, I am pleased to announce, the Ministry of Labour, together with the Ministry of Natural Resources and WSIB, had all summer students and all those under 25 years of age take the passport to safety certification program.

The certification they received over the past summer will stand them in good stead throughout their working lives. But it doesn't end there. Because of the success of the program, because of the agreement of all those involved on how valuable it is, that program is now being made available with their other partners throughout the country so that we can make sure, in short order, that all young workers receive this very important training. This government is delighted to participate in this basic awareness protection for young workers.

## SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** My question is for the Minister of Education. During the election campaign, Dalton McGuinty, the now Premier, promised millions in funding to keep small schools open even though you all knew there was a \$5-billion deficit—pardon, risk, as some of you call it. Mr McGuinty at the time said, "We will put our money where our mouth is."

Last week, Minister, you sent a letter asking school boards not to close schools. So I say to you, I see your mouth moving, but I don't see the money flowing. Minister, how can school boards keep schools open if you're not giving them any money?

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** The House has marvelled today at the closeness of the opposition parties on fiscal situations, and now to see today the member opposite stand up and talk as if he's against keeping rural schools open, as if he somehow doesn't want to see other schools that have value be looked after—it's funny to see that he wouldn't be in favour of that fundamental policy. He, as a knowledgeable person in this field, realizes that there are no implications for boards this year. There are no financial implications for not closing schools in the next fiscal year.

He might know as well that we've been out there now, in four out of five sessions, speaking individually and as a group with all the trustees in the province. I can tell you, they are being very positive. They know that we've changed the channel here, that education is not going to be about square footage and buildings, but it's actually going to be, for once, about how well students are doing. I can assure you that this government sees its obligations in response to education as its number one priority, as we said in the throne speech. We invite the member opposite to get behind the mission of this government to see students improve in schools all across the province.

**Mr Marchese:** I'll tell the minister that Marchese and New Democrats like the idea of keeping small schools open. We do. We've got a problem, though, and he has a bigger problem. Without money, schools such as Newington Public School in Cornwall, which, as their Web site says, is "the heart of our community," will close. In fact, the board said two days ago that they will. Your promise not to close schools is grossly deceptive. Parents actually believe you won't close schools when boards know they can't keep them open without money.

My question to you, Minister, is this: Give them the money or take back your empty promise.

**Hon Mr Kennedy:** Empty? But when I hear "empty," it's rhetoric, because all across this province, the Halton school board, the school board in Thunder Bay and Superior, the school board in Greater Essex have decided not to close down schools, and they've done that because we took an initiative in the interest of students, not standing up and playing politics.

To this member opposite, we found \$112 million for the neediest students in this province, and all I've heard



from the member opposite and the party opposite is non-support for that. They didn't support cancelling the private school tax credit, which is one of the resources that, if this Legislature finally agrees, will be available to make some of these things happen. Put your focus, I would say to the member opposite, on the needs of students. Stop grandstanding around things. We'll keep good schools open in this province, but they won't happen any easier with the way you're addressing your responsibilities. I look forward to working with you.

### HYDRO RATES

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, prior to the election, you told CFRB about hydro rate relief. You said, "We have to maintain rate relief for consumers. I have had the terrible responsibility to raise horror stories in the Legislature—people who have been put in a desperate position because they simply can't afford to pay their hydro. So we've got to maintain rate relief for our ratepayers."

Premier, I wish to bring to your attention the situation of a single parent and their son in Alliston who had their hydro cut off 12 days ago. The first six days of that period, on most evenings the temperature dropped to minus 16 degrees. Your office was called by local church leaders 15 times and four e-mails were sent, with no response. If you truly and honestly meant what you said on CFRB before the election, will you approve a no-winter-disconnect amendment in order to protect low-income citizens in Ontario this winter?

1540

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Minister of Energy would like to speak to this.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I will ask the member in this particular instance to forward it to me. I have not been made aware of that circumstance. You raised another case in the House several days ago. I wrote you a letter and asked you to provide me with the details. I haven't checked as of today, but we still haven't received the details from the case.

This government is committed to ensuring that nobody is adversely affected by the decisions of the previous government that undermined the viability of our electricity system, and we are moving forward in a positive way to ensure that these problems don't happen again in the future.

**Mr Jackson:** Sir, you're undermining the life chances of certain Ontarians with your comment. If you don't know about it, your staff certainly do, because they're quoted in the paper. Now Premier, I asked you this question, and I asked you because it's you who broke your word to the people of Ontario. It is the fact that people trusted you that they would have protection from growing hydro rates. Poor people put their faith in you, not their Minister of Energy, because he's increasing their rates. He's giving a billion-dollar increase to the

very utilities that are cutting off the electricity of persons on welfare in this province. They didn't put their faith in the Treasurer, who has increased taxes for the low-income groups; they put their faith in you, Premier.

Will you demonstrate today to this House and to this province that you are a man of your word, that you carried your compassion from this side of the House to your seat as Premier, and that you will now stand in your place and promise that your government will bring in the no-winter-closure amendment that I tabled in this House last week so that Ontarians are protected this winter? Will you do it, yes or no?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** In the case of Alliston, I can say to the member that Hydro One makes several attempts to contact customers before disconnect occurs. In this type of situation a customer would have received several notices. During freezing weather, residential service interruption is phased in over a number of days. The onus is on the customer to contact Hydro One to work out an arrangement.

That being said, coming from a government that cut welfare, didn't raise the minimum wage, didn't raise ODSP, didn't deal with the problems of those living in poverty, that is the height of—I can't use an unparliamentary term, but it makes no sense. You spent the last eight years hurting these people. We're fixing the mess you created. We have more compassion in our little finger than your entire government had in eight long, painful years. Thank goodness those days are long since gone.

### ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

**Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre):** My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, a report has been released in my riding of London called *Voices for Change*. The report finds that, as is the trend across the province, the city of London is underutilizing the skills of immigrants.

We all know that foreign-trained professionals and skilled workers are vital to the economic prosperity of our province. To compete nationally and internationally we need to take full advantage of the skills of all Ontarians. Is it not a gift to have individuals from around the world enter our province already equipped with most, if not all, of the tools they need to succeed? Are we not wasting valuable human resources by not allowing foreign-trained workers to do what they are trained to do?

The *Voices for Change* report calls on the provincial government to demonstrate increased leadership toward removing barriers to professions and trades for internationally educated persons.

Minister, what is our government going to do to address this issue of vital importance to my community and across the province?

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** I want to thank the member

from London North Centre for that question. I'm not surprised our colleagues across the floor would not consider this to be an important matter. That's too bad, because we believe it is a very important matter, and I can speak from personal experience about the demands that are placed on people aspiring to move to this beautiful country to step up to the plate in terms of what they bring to this country.

Every year, Ontario becomes home to 120,000 new immigrants, and more than 70% of these people come with a post-secondary education. So it is absolutely critical that we should want to give them access to the professions in which they are trained. My ministry, and I want to thank my public servants, is working really hard to make that happen for them.

**Ms Matthews:** Minister, there is a specific recommendation in this report to strengthen and enhance the provincial bridge training programs for skilled immigrants. These programs assess the individual's skills, provide the skilled worker with training and Canadian workplace experience, and help qualified individuals move quickly into the labour market without duplicating what they have already learned. Is our government willing to consider this recommendation for strengthened bridge training programs?

**Hon Mrs Chambers:** Thanks again to the member for London North Centre. Not only are we considering it, but we have actually moved ahead, because we think this is an opportunity for some really early wins in terms of our ability to engage these individuals more successfully.

I can tell you that there are bridging programs on the way. I can also tell you that we are working with 38 regulatory bodies across the province and with other organizations that are not under these kinds of regulations, because we think it's really easy to help these new immigrants bring their skills to bear to make our province of Ontario the province it can be, the province the Premier has promised it can be, the province our government is committed to making it.

## NUISANCE BEARS

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** My question today is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On November 10, your ministry released the Nuisance Bear Review Committee's report. At that time, you were quoted in the Pembroke Daily Observer stating you would have an answer on this issue within two weeks.

The people in my riding would like to know if you are going to reinstate the spring bear hunt, as nuisance bears have become a major source of worry for my constituents. Human contact with bears has increased dramatically over the last two years, and something needs to be done now. The report revealed that the review committee supports and recommends the reinstatement of this hunt, as do I. Minister, my constituents are waiting for an answer. Will you tell them today what that answer is?

1550

**Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):** I really do thank the member very much for asking that question today, because 50 minutes ago I released that the Ministry of Natural Resources is going to upload the responsibility back from municipalities to the ministry to take care of nuisance bears in Ontario.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. This kind of demonstration—please allow the other members to ask their questions. I don't like your taking away the time with this grandstanding applause.

**Mr Yakabuski:** Well, 50 minutes ago I was in this House and I didn't have any ministry staff putting out press releases. Actually, that issue was part of my—

**Interjection:** Say thank you.

**Mr Yakabuski:** I do thank the minister, because actually part of my supplementary question was about the offloading of responsibility for nuisance bears, and people in my riding will be happy to hear that. But what he hasn't answered is my original question, which is: Will you, as the committee recommended, reinstate the spring bear hunt?

**Hon Mr Ramsay:** I'd like to thank the member, in his first question, for giving me that lob ball question from the opposition. I would say to the member that in my statement today we are also stating that it is not our intention to reinstate the spring bear hunt.

We are moving forward with a comprehensive bear management program. This is going to include a hotline number so that police departments and citizens who feel there is a nuisance bear problem can call that number and get a response from the Ministry of Natural Resources. There is going to be an increased bear education program for the people of Ontario. But more important, what we're going to do in the next three months is consult with police, municipalities and other stakeholders as to how we can best help them deal with the nuisance bear problem that is plaguing Ontario.

## WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** Speaker, through you to the people of Ontario, it's a privilege to ask a question of the Minister of Transportation. With the cold weather upon us, Ontario's motorists have now to contend with snow, ice and often treacherous driving conditions. As physicians, we often see significant injuries, many disabling. As people travel from mall to mall and from party to party, it's important that government work to make the highways as safe as possible. Minister, how is your ministry working to reduce winter hazards faced by Ontario motorists?

**Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** I want to thank the honourable member for his important and very timely question.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** He wants to thank his staff for writing it.

**Hon Mr Takhar:** I could thank my staff as well.



I want to assure the members of the House and the people of Ontario that our winter maintenance standards are the highest in North America. We use the latest technology. We have more than 1,000 snowplows and spreaders that are ready to face the winter conditions.

**Mr Qaadri:** Thank you, Minister, for your response. It's very reassuring to know that Ontario's winter maintenance operations are ready for winter.

Unfortunately, the first storms of the season often catch many Ontario motorists off guard. Winter driving is often not something we think about until the situation is upon us, and of course there are steps drivers should take to be prepared for winter before the snow starts falling. Minister, what efforts is your ministry taking to educate motorists on how to be prepared for bad winter road conditions?

**Hon Mr Takhar:** The honourable member is right: We know that winter conditions can come at any time and that they can be dangerous for travellers sometimes.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Takhar:** I think the former Minister of Transportation wants to answer this question. He is always willing to do that.

Let me outline some of the measures we have taken. I think it's always important to educate the public to take proactive measures, so we have issued memos with regard to safe winter driving, emergency survival kits and actions to take if stranded. We also have partnered with McDonald's to distribute safe winter driving tips. We will also encourage the people to use winter driving brochures and our Web site. In addition, I would like to encourage all Ontario drivers to drive safely during these holidays.

#### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a question for the Premier. Your Treasurer implied today that you want people to temper their requests for more, but there are thousands and thousands of Ontarians who have every right to ask for, and indeed expect, more. In 1995, families on social assistance had their income cut by 22%, and they've been frozen ever since. After the Kimberly Rogers inquest you promised to review social assistance rates and you led families to believe there would be an increase in their income. Premier, families who live on social assistance now in Ontario are living in poverty. When will you increase their rates?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I'm referring this matter to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** Yesterday in answer to a question in this House, we mentioned that our government is obligated to respond to the Kimberly inquest recommendations. Those answers are expected by February of the new year. What we intend to have in motion in the government at that point is a series of reforms to Ontario Works so that

the system would actually work for people. What we committed to in the campaign was to increase both the disability and welfare rates to match COLA so that the inflation rate can be taken into account with their assistance. Our decision is when we can do that and how quickly we can do that. Unfortunately, with this government, we understand that this particular group of people was used as the typical punching bag of the last government for the last eight or nine years. We can't fix all those programs and problems overnight, but we are looking diligently at our package of reforms to go forward to my colleagues quickly.

**Ms Martel:** Ten minutes ago your Minister of Energy had a lot to say about people on social assistance. The question I have for you is, when are you going to do something concrete, something positive, for people who are on social assistance? They can't wait. In the same way, we've got thousands and thousands of Ontarians who have disabilities and have also had their income frozen for the last 10 years. On April 7, your Premier wrote a letter to David Lepofsky and said, "On forming government, following the election, we will provide a cost-of-living increase for participants in the Ontario disability support program." People who live with disabilities, who've had their pensions frozen for 10 years, can't wait. When will you increase the rates for disabled Ontarians?

**Hon Ms Pupatello:** I will repeat the McGuinty commitment during the last campaign, which is what our party campaigned on and what our party will deliver on, and that is an increase to the ODSP and welfare rates to match COLA. That's what we will implement. What we know is that this last government left us with a mess. What we know is that we need to clean up the mess. What are we working on today? We are working on cleaning up the mess. We intend to treat people who are on welfare or disability with dignity. That means a series of reforms that are necessary to actually help people who really need help—and those who want to abuse the system, to keep them out. We are moving forward quickly on a series that I believe all people in this House will support.

#### AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** A question to the Minister of Health: Can you confirm that the region of Niagara has won the RFP for ambulance dispatch in the peninsula?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I want to say that I recognize the issue of land ambulance in Niagara is an issue of serious concern to the residents of that community. If there was any doubt about it for me, the minister—the member for St Catharines—badgers me nearly every day on this issue, and the member for Niagara Falls is quickly learning the trade as well. I want to say to all members from Niagara that this is at a decision point in my ministry and I'm very pleased to commit to the member

that a decision will be made very, very soon on this matter.

1600

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciate the answer of the minister. It's not surprising, because it is an issue of great importance, as he knows, in the peninsula.

I think this minister knows an RFP was issued in May and closed in July. According to press reports, the region of Niagara is the only bidder of record. On November 22 your own ministry spokesperson told the St Catharines Standard that the RFP was completed and that the winning bid was moving through the final legislative process.

Minister, I think you also know the bid expires in February, which means that all of the hard work to date will be tossed out the window. There is also a commitment that your party made to the people of Niagara in the run-up to the last election. I'll ask you again to confirm if the winning bid has been chosen, and could you kindly give a time frame as to when that will become known to the people of Niagara.

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I will say that I'm very aware of the time deadline that's there. I can assure the member and the people of Niagara that all of the effort that has been made to date won't go to waste. I would restate my earlier commitment, which is to make sure that we get a decision out for the people of Niagara very early in the new year at the latest.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Pursuant to standing order 30(b), I am now required to call orders of the day.

**Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to present a petition on behalf of a group of people who've travelled quite a distance from my riding. I know it's late in the day, but they have come a very long way and I seek unanimous consent to present a petition on their behalf.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Do I have unanimous consent? Did I hear a no? Let me ask again when the place is quiet. Order.

Do we have unanimous consent for the member to present one petition? Agreed.

## PETITIONS

### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** My gratitude to you all. Thank you so much for your indulgence. We realize it's a little late, but as I said, we have two groups here. A group for the Freedom Train from Glanbrook and the Battle for Stoney Creek have travelled quite a distance to see this petition presented on their behalf.

Petition to the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas an act of the provincial Legislature led to the amalgamation of the six historic municipalities of Hamilton-Wentworth into one 'new' city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this amalgamation not only proceeded without majority consent of the residents within the six former independent communities and in fact over the rejection by more than 90% of those casting ballots in the citizens' referendum held on February 8, 1997 in five of the six former constituent municipalities; and

"Whereas the rationale expressed by the provincial government of the day for proceeding with the amalgamation was to promote good government by ensuring the provision of more accessible, accountable and streamlined local government, enhancing and improving the provision of quality municipal services, and achieving both of the above while lowering overall costs and taxes; and

"Whereas any provincial government must never be afraid to be held accountable for and/or take such initiatives as may be necessary to correct the actions of a previous government; and

"Whereas many citizens believe that their democratic right is to be consulted on the form, style and structure of their municipal government and to directly participate in democratically determining if a proposed change is desirable;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act to cause the following question to be put to the voters within the city of Hamilton at the first available opportunity:

"Do you favour a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier municipality and six lower-tier municipalities, being the towns of Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, the township of Glanbrook and the cities of Hamilton and Stoney Creek?"

Attached are 3,765 names.

Also from Glanbrook:

"The citizens of Glanbrook petition the Legislature of Ontario to undo the injustice that was forced on us by the Conservative Party with amalgamation of Glanbrook into the city of Hamilton against the wishes of the citizens who voted in a referendum on February 8, 1997, by a 98% margin not to be forced into the city of Hamilton.

"In 1999 the government moved and forced the amalgamation, ignoring our clear-cut 'no' vote, but promised tax decreases, streamlined services and more efficient and accountable local government.

"Over the past three years, Glanbrook has seen an average 30% tax increase, not decrease, and services have consistently deteriorated and we have non-existent accountability.

"Today the citizens of Glanbrook present this petition, signed by more than 55% of eligible voters that we were able to contact, with less than 1% of citizens refusing to sign.

"We sincerely request the Liberal government of Ontario give this matter the due and serious consideration



it warrants and use this opportunity to ensure that the democratic rights of the voting public are maintained," and another nearly 4,000 signatures.

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** May I ask the House's indulgence to introduce—I see he's just leaving now—John Sola, the former member from Mississauga East.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2003

##### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA GESTION RESPONSABLE DES FINANCES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 16, 2003, on the motion for third reading of Bill 2, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility / Projet de loi 2, Loi concernant la gestion responsable des finances.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Further debate? Wait a second. All sit, please. I don't know who's standing.

The member for Beaches-East York.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:** I think this tie is absolutely in keeping with the season.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure we were to do questions and answers first on this. Mr Flaherty's in the House, and we were to do, based on his—

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** Where? Oh, there he is.

**Mr Dunlop:** Pardon me? Before Mr Prue goes ahead, I believe we have the q's and a's from—

**Hon Mr Caplan:** He's not in his seat.

**The Speaker:** Please sit down. If Mr Flaherty was in his seat, I would be able to recognize him. When I looked there, it was vacant.

As I speak, he will then walk toward his chair, and maybe if he gets there in time for me to say, "Questions and comments?" then I will say, "Questions and comments?"

Member for Simcoe North.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'm pleased to make a few comments on the speech, the first one-hour rotation by Mr Flaherty, Mr Runciman and Mr Baird. As you know, we're very much opposed to this piece of legislation, Bill 2. In his comments, Mr Flaherty pointed out the unfairness of it, particularly with the retroactivity concerning the education tax credit for religious and private schools. I think it's important that the residents of the province of Ontario understand just what a severe impact this may in fact have on many of our constituents.

I know that in my own riding I have a Christian school. It was built by religious organizations within the city of Orillia and the district. I have had a number of letters from the parents and staff at this particular school. They're very much opposed to this legislation going through, particularly with the retroactivity, because it is going to have a major impact—oh, it's a different Speaker now—on their Christmas season. They were counting on the \$1,400 back this year per family. It will have an impact. I'm telling you right now, these are not people who drive around in fancy cars and the level of school like we would see at Upper Canada College, but certainly what's important here is that these people faithfully built their school. They send their children to a school with religious denominations that they believe in. This has a severe impact on their lifestyle.

I would again ask the members of the government to please consider any kind of amendment that would help these people out. It is having a negative impact. I think it's a disgraceful performance on behalf of the government to treat these people this way.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

1610

**Mr Prue:** I happen to have been on the committee that heard all of the depositions and much of what the member from Whitby-Ajax had to talk about the other day. To tell you the truth, much of the position of his party was not, in my view, supportable. Much of what was contained in this bill was a reasonable and rational explanation to a situation that this new government now finds itself in.

But I must state for the record that there is one part of this bill in which I find myself in complete agreement with the members of the Conservative Party and with the member from Whitby-Ajax, and that is on the provision of the retroactivity of law. It is an abhorrent position in this bill. It is an abhorrent position for this government to take. In fact, it is almost unheard of in the annals of legislative law in this country, in this province or in any province or jurisdiction in Canada and, indeed, probably any jurisdiction in the British Commonwealth. It has taken a provision of law that people had come to rely upon and, in the stroke of a pen, retroactively changed it, to make their actions almost illegal, to make the amount of money they were expecting in tax refunds nonexistent.

I will tell you, that is the portion that I intend to spend some of my speaking time on when my turn comes up shortly, because, with the greatest of respect to the drafters of the bill, the intent of this is going to deny people who had a legitimate right under the former government, to have that right taken away, not today, which I agree with, but retroactively. That is the one part that I agree with him on his speech. On everything else, I will be saying that I think the government is headed in the right direction.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** We're talking about the third reading of Bill 2, and I'm glad to hear my friend

from Beaches-East York make the comment that we're heading in the right direction, because it's good to have that acknowledgement. I know that he's concerned about one area of the bill, and that's fair game in terms of pointing out where the flaw is.

But I want to make sure that people know that when we listened to the speech from the member from Whitby-Ajax, he made an awful lot of broad statements about the government and broad statements about what it is that he believes, so let me share with him some of the things that we believe. We believe that we've changed the direction of government and we've changed to delivering real change, which we ran on. That's a fact. We ran on change and we also ran on changing the direction of what government does for and to people in the province of Ontario.

Let's make it very clear: They fired water inspectors; we're hiring them back. They encouraged sprawl by the way they used the rules and regulations; we're changing the Planning Act, and it's done. They closed schools because of the faulty funding formula, especially in rural and small urban areas; we're changing that. We've put a moratorium on closing those schools, and we're going to get the funding formula right. They hid these task force reports on mental health and did not release them; we've released them. They wasted millions of dollars on self-promotional government advertising; we introduced a law that bans that altogether so that no party can use it. They pointed fingers at our federal cousins at a regular, annoying and agonizing rate; we sat down and negotiated an agricultural deal and the SARS relief deal. We started that dialogue.

That's what the people of Ontario want. Very simply, very bluntly, they want all three levels of government to sit down and get the job of governing done, helping the people of Ontario. That's the change we're implementing, that's the change we're promoting, and we're getting it done.

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I just wanted to add a few further comments. I am new to this Legislature and come from a municipal background and decided to run, following in the footsteps of some of my other colleagues who came from cities, such as the member from Beaches-Danforth—

**Mr Prue:** Beaches-East York.

**Mr Berardinetti:** Beaches-East York; my apologies. We actually border each other in our ridings, and sometimes have similar philosophies on certain issues and disagree on certain other issues.

But in this recent election, the platform of the Liberal Party was clear. We made it clear that we could not be all things to all people. I just wanted to say that I clearly recall knocking on some doors of seniors, especially toward the end of the election. These seniors said to me, "We don't want this tax break. We'd rather see the money put into schools and hospitals." They got the message.

This bill in front of us today, which is going through third reading, speaks to that. I can go back to those

seniors and say to them that in less than two months we have delivered and have begun the process of undoing some of the things the previous government was trying to do. I know that comments made earlier by the former Minister of Finance embraced a certain philosophy, but on October 2, people voted, and they decided to choose change. They decided to choose a different philosophy or a different aspect of governing. Bill 2, I think, is a first step toward doing that, and I'm pleased to support it today.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Whitby-Ajax has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** This bill is about tax hikes—the largest tax hikes in the history of Ontario—by a government that, when it was seeking public office, said they would hold the line. Mr McGuinty said, "We will hold the line on taxes."

I'll tell you what's going on—we saw it in the House this afternoon with the economic statement. Here's the Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review the Minister of Finance was using today. Do you know what they're doing on the spending side? It's shocking. Actual spending in 2002-03, to March 31 this year—this is on page 36—is \$68.492 billion. Here's what they plan to spend this year: \$75.153 billion.

They're increasing spending—they're planning to do this in the next few months—by more than 10%. It's \$7 billion. It's shocking. No wonder they had to have a bill like Bill 2, raising taxes for everybody in Ontario—raising taxes shockingly—and adding to the tax roll lower-income persons our government removed from the tax roll. So get used to it, I say to the people of Ontario. To the members for Scarborough Southwest, for Brant and for Beaches-East York, I say, get used to it; we're going to see lots more tax hikes. You can't spend like this—increase spending 10% in a single year; huge spending increases—and not raise taxes. That's what they're going to do. We're going to see massive tax increases in Ontario.

I want to thank the member for Simcoe North, Mr Dunlop. We've had people fighting for generations for equity in education in this province, in the Christian schools, the Muslim schools and the Jewish schools. The present from this government to them is retroactive tax hikes for them and their families at this time of the year. Thank you to the government of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

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**Mr Prue:** I'm here today to talk about Bill 2. I have a great many things to say and I understand I have half an hour in which to say them, and I thank all the members present. I don't know if I'll use the entire time, but maybe I will.

We'll start off with its title; I'd like to talk about that for a minute. Its official title is An Act respecting fiscal responsibility.

When I first came into this Legislature some two years ago, I was treated to a barrage of acts that were put before the Legislature that had very strange names. I



think the strangest one of all was an act called the Tenant Protection Act. It was an act that did not protect tenants. It has an almost Orwellian name, because the real intent of that act was to protect landlords. I was hoping that a new government would get around some of this naming of bills and acts that really did not do what they were intended to do.

This act does not respect fiscal responsibility. This act does a number of things. It is an omnibus bill. It changes not one set of regulations, not one way of collecting money, but quite literally involves eight separate pieces of legislation, and I'd just like to go through those. It involves changes to the Corporations Tax Act, changes to the GO Transit Act, changes to the Income Tax Act, changes to the equity in education bill, changes to the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, changes to the Loan Act, changes to the Retail Sales Act and, last but not least, changes to the Tobacco Tax Act. This is an omnibus bill; it is not An Act respecting fiscal responsibility.

Each one of these, I would submit, should have been properly before this House, properly before this Legislature in its own right. Each one of these, even some of the less contentious issues, surely should have merited its own bill, and each one of the contentious issues—and I would submit there are probably three contentious issues within this bill—should have been subject to its own public hearings. This was not the case with this particular bill. Sadly, what we had is a very quick—I would think almost too quick—meeting of the committee. The committee had one day of hearings, only in Toronto on, in reality, eight separate pieces of legislation. There was not time for people to come forward. In fact, there was not even real time for people to find out what was contained in the bill.

Of the eight bills, people came to speak primarily to one, the equity in education act, and people also came in smaller numbers: one speaker on the Corporations Tax Act and one on the Tobacco Tax Act. They all said the same thing: They had literally just found out about the bill and hurriedly tried to put together their thoughts on paper to come from literally across the province in some cases to try to tell the members of the committee what they thought should be changed.

Those groups struggled valiantly and, I would suggest, vainly to get their message across, because even though those 10 groups came forward to change those eight acts, not one thing they said was listened to. The committee did not adopt a single proposal from any of them that they were advocating, save and except the group that came to tell the government they were happy with what was contained in the bill. I do admit, you did satisfy them.

Much of what was contained in the bill has my support and, I'm sure, would have the support of the New Democratic Party. I'd like to go through what was in the bill. Had it been properly handled, had it been subject to a full range of public discussion and had the committee considered some of the proposals that were put forward,

I'm sure it would gain a broad range of public support. But the reality is, even though none of that happened, what is contained in the bill, in my own gut reaction as a legislator in the province of Ontario, is supportable, and I'd just like to go through some of those.

One of the major changes was the changes to the Corporations Tax Act, changing the corporate tax in Ontario from 12.5% to 14% and the manufacturing tax from 11% to 12%. There were those on the committee from the official opposition who did not agree with this. I will tell you that we in the New Democratic Party believe that this is justifiable in terms of the amount of money this government is going to need to live up to some of its promises. It is justifiable if there is—and I'll take the government at its word for the moment—a \$5.6-billion deficit in the province and those monies are necessary in order for this government to balance the books. I would not have any hesitancy in saying that if the money is necessary from a particular tax area, the corporations in Ontario certainly have the wherewithal to pay that with very little penalty, with very little ill will on their part.

The corporations in the province of Ontario, I would suggest, are taxed at a fair rate, or perhaps slightly below that fair rate vis-à-vis the corporations in the surrounding provinces and in the border states of the United States. Our tax advantage is very similar to all of theirs, or at least would be similar when the taxes are increased as has been suggested. To me, it makes good economic sense, if this province needs the money, that the money comes from there. New Democrats have no problem with that provision of the act, none whatsoever.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:** Well, I did. I did in committee. If you want to heckle me, at least know what you're heckling about. I voted for that provision. One of the members is here and he is nodding his head in the affirmative. You can ask. In fact, I voted for all of the provisions, save one, and I'm going to get to that at the end.

The second part is that we support—I can't even read my own writing—the elimination of the ill-conceived property tax relief for seniors. This was a bill that was brought in by the former government in the dying days of the 37th Parliament in order to, I think, curry favour with some of their friends and the seniors' community who did not fully understand the purport of the bill. We support the government doing away with what can only be described as one of the worst, ill-conceived pieces of legislation ever to see the floor of this chamber.

I just want to tell the members who were not here, and perhaps some of the people who are watching today, what this bill did. I went to the committee to question the then Minister of Finance, the Honourable Janet Ecker, as she then was, to ask her what was going to happen with this seniors tax bill. It was quite instructive about what this was going to do to the seniors of Ontario: If you were a senior who lived in a home for the aged and had very little money and gave almost all of your money that you got from Canada pension and the supplement to the home for the aged to look after you in your declining



years, you got nothing from this bill. You got nothing. If you were a senior who lived in a subsidized apartment, say in Cambridge, just to pick a place, and you paid \$350 a month for your subsidized unit, you got the equivalent of less than \$10 a month under the provisions of this bill. If you were a senior who lived in an \$850 apartment in Toronto, which is the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in this city, you went up to the magnificent sum of around \$20 a month that you would receive under the provisions of this bill. If you were a senior who was a homeowner in small-town Ontario—and I used the example at that point of my own parents living in Cardiff, Ontario, just outside of Bancroft, where average homes are about \$65,000—you would receive about \$25 or \$30 a month under the provisions of this bill. If you were a senior who lived in a \$250,000 home, which is the average cost of a house in Toronto, you would receive \$60 or \$70 a month. And finally, but not least, when I asked, what happens if you live in \$1-million home—and we gave some examples of \$1-million, \$2-million and \$3-million homes in this city and in other places in Ontario—we found out that people got the equivalent of \$30,000 a year as a tax benefit.

This was a not a tax benefit for seniors; this was a tax benefit for rich seniors. The richer you were, the more you owned, the more money you got back in relief, and the poorer you were and the more you needed the money, the less you would get. We did not support that as New Democrats, and I certainly welcome that the government has taken this out. It is not something that should be reintroduced in this Legislature any time in the near future.

There were other provisions of the bill which I think probably caused no one much concern. There was the provision for GO Transit, and there were the provisions relating to the Ontario Loan Act and to the retail sales act. Most of those were housekeeping measures to involve the former acts that were about to expire on December 31. It was housekeeping, and we were happy to put up our hands for those as well.

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There was a bit of a problem. Even though I still support what the government is doing, there is and continues to be a problem with the Tobacco Tax Act. We applaud the government for taking a first step. Although it is, by my own reckoning, a very timid step, it is nonetheless welcome; that is, to charge the smoking public an extra \$2.50 per carton of cigarettes. That's what the government wants to do to try to bring the cost of cigarettes closer in line with the Canadian average.

The problem that we see with this is twofold. Number one is that tobacco costs in Ontario will still be lower than the jurisdictions around Ontario. Second, and more pervasive, is the lacuna in the act relating to bulk tobacco. I can sit and speak about it, but I think it's far better from the presenter, a Mr Perley, from the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco. I'd like to quote from his brief. I don't have the transcript but I think he read it almost word for word. I have his brief here. I would like

to read what he had to say, because we felt there should be some changes, and I proposed the changes. Of course, those changes were not to be. They were procedural, and I understand that, and maybe the members opposite—but the minister could do something about this, should the minister be of such a mind. Reading from Mr Perley's text: "Next, despite the increase mandated in Bill 2, Ontario still has the lowest tobacco taxes of any jurisdiction in Canada at \$19.70 per carton of 200 cigarettes."

"As well, an important loophole in the current tax structure is the fact that loose tobacco ... is taxed as if one gram of loose tobacco is required to make one cigarette. In fact, tobacco manufacturers have developed various techniques ... to reduce tobacco density. Expanded tobacco provides a tax benefit.... Governments tax by weight ... but the consumer ... thinks in terms of the number of roll-your-own cigarettes per tub of tobacco. There's therefore a strong incentive to use the lowest possible density of tobacco."

"At present in Canada, as little as 0.45 grams of roll-your-own is equivalent to one manufactured cigarette. The advertising claims on these tubs are self-explanatory."

"This tax loophole is important because roll-your-own now takes up about 10.9% of the Canadian market as measured in the 12 months leading up to June 2003 from figures in Imperial Tobacco's June 2003 second-quarter report and its 2002 annual report. In contrast, roll-your-own took up 8.7% of the market in 2001."

What this is, in a nutshell, is that people who are buying bulk tobacco are paying only roughly the equivalent or less than half of the tax that they should be paying if the cigarettes were manufactured by machine. Because they roll it in their hand, the tobacco—the actual thing that is being taxed—is being taxed at a much lower rate. Although cigarette sales are down in Canada, what is surprising and unnerving is that bulk tobacco sales are up.

What is happening is that young people particularly, who are finding the cost of cigarettes onerous—and I think this bill is trying to make it onerous; at least, I hope it's trying to make it onerous so they don't get hooked in the first place—are switching to roll-your-own cigarettes where the tax is not there.

What Mr Perley asked for, and what I thought was reasonable and put forward by way of motion, is that bulk tobacco be taxed at the rate of \$2.50, that it be taxed not per gram but in terms of half grams or portions thereof, in order to make the taxes roughly equivalent.

It was stated in committee—and that may be the rule—that I could not move such a motion because that was a ministerial prerogative. If it's a ministerial prerogative, I would like the minister to exercise that prerogative. I would like him to come on to the floor and say, "Mr Perley, you are absolutely right. Mr Prue, your motion is a fine motion. I will adopt it as my own."

I don't know whether such a thing would ever happen, but if it did, it would have two effects. The first and most important one is to stop a lot of young people from taking



up the cigarette habit, and secondly, it would also be an extra source of revenue for this government, which seems determined to raise funds. If you are to raise funds, I would suggest that the best place to raise them is in this area where there is a loophole in the law, and where you are bringing fairness in terms of how many taxes people pay, those who have manufactured cigarettes versus those who choose to roll their own. They should both be paying the same amount of tax on the amount of tobacco that is contained within the packages.

Having said that, that was not to be. We voted, and it didn't pass, but to me that was not the matter that caused the greatest concern in terms of this bill. I've saved that one for last to make sure I had sufficient time. The concern that was expressed by eight out of the 10 deputants involved the area of the changes to the equity in education tax credit. The people who came to speak specifically to this—I'd just like to quote them for the record. They came. They came with briefs. They came with hundreds of pages of documentation, with letters from a broad range of Ontarians. They included B'nai Brith Canada, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Jewish Congress of Ontario, Children First: School Choice Trust, the Islamic Society of North America, the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools and the Ontario Association of Jewish Day Schools. Peripherally as well, People for Education's Ms Kidder appeared on their behalf, but in a slightly different context.

The equity in education tax credit proposed by the previous government is abhorrent to me. I do not agree with it. I will never agree with it. I believe the legislation was flawed at its inception, and I believe the legislation that doubled the amount from 10% to 20% in the second year was wrong. It cost the taxpayers of this province tens of millions of dollars, perhaps as much as \$165 million, money that should have, and could have, been spent in the public school system, money that I hope will revert to the public school system. I echo the words of Annie Kidder, that the money that is saved from this program should be earmarked for improving our public schools, many of which are in states of disrepair, many of which no longer have principals and vice-principals, many of which no longer have secretaries or caretakers or people to look after the children.

Having said that, there is something bad about this bill. There is something that caused me, in the whole part of this bill—although I am supportive and I've just spoken now for 21 minutes on what is good in this bill—that causes me, as a legislator, such grave concern that I cannot, in all conscience, support what is otherwise excellent legislation. What causes me the grief is that this bill is retroactive. No bill in Canada, no law in Canada of which I am aware, in the last 30 or 40 years, be it federally or provincially, has been retroactive, save and except on occasion when that retroactivity will cause benefit or where people are given the opportunity to choose one set of regulations versus another, whichever one will be of greater benefit to them. Where there is an

option, retroactivity can and may work. But that is not the case here.

What has happened here is that this bill seeks to undo in a very negative way the policies of the former government. I do not agree with those policies. I would be so pleased if this bill said, "Effective October 23"—the day we were sworn in—"we are cancelling the provisions of the equity in education tax credit." That, to me, would be logical. This government, the Liberal Party, campaigned, went from door to door, and on television and in leaders' debates, and talked about doing precisely that.

**1640**

New Democrats said the same thing, and we believe the same thing. Not once in the leaders' debates, not once in any of the time this was in the public forum leading up to election day, and not once even between election day, October 2, and October 23, and not once before this bill was read into the House did anyone ever suggest it was going to be a retroactive bill. I've checked every record I can find. I could not find any suggestion this was going to be retroactive to January 1, 2003.

Because it is retroactive, what does it do? You may say, "Well, it's retroactive. Everybody knew what we were saying." Yes, everybody knew what you were saying and everybody knew what we were saying, and they were the government and that's the way it was. Unless they had a crystal ball on January 1, 2003, when they were making plans for their family, for their children, for the education they were trying to give them, people could not possibly have imagined that the plans and monies they expended and the law they were relying on would change retroactively to their detriment. No one could have done that. That is the problem with retroactive law. Families across this province went out and sent their children to private schools. As I said, I don't support it. If they want to have a private school, they should pay themselves. But having said that, they made a commitment based on what the law of the land was.

What this bill does is that it takes the money those people had relied upon, which the law said was going to naturally come to them, and says they can't have it. When I questioned the minister how much was involved here by going retroactively to the beginning of the year, I got two numbers. I'm not really sure which one it is, but let's go with the lower one, which is \$165 million. There was also some suggestion of \$195 million. That is the suggestion of how much money is there by going retroactively to the beginning of the year and how much the government will save. Had the government chosen October 23, as the date on which they were sworn in, to change this bill, the amount of money that would have been saved would have been closer, I would suggest, to about \$40 million. So what you're looking at is \$125 million that is, in my view, a tax grab. It is not a change in legislation which is welcomed. It is a tax grab from people who often can ill afford it. It is absolutely wrong to do this in law.



Being one of the oldest members, I think, in the Legislature, I go back to the time of the War Measures Act. I still remember that. I was in university. I remember when the War Measures Act was put into Parliament. There were many people unhappy about the civil liberties being taken away in those days, but what the War Measures Act never did was the War Measures Act never made membership illegal in the FLQ, the Front de libération du Québec—it made it illegal the next morning, because people could not be said to belong to an illegal organization, could not be said to have done something that was wrong or immoral, when there was no law against it. The next morning there was a law against it and people had to be so governed.

I think that's probably the best example. Even in times when there were kidnappings, even in times when the whole country was in a state of flux and people were worried for their lives and the future of this country, even then the law was not retroactive. But here we have a provision that does precisely that. The only rationale I can possibly give to anyone is that it is retroactive because it provides for an additional \$125 million to the government coffers. I know the money's needed; you know the money's needed. We all, perhaps with a few exceptions on this side, know the money is needed. We know that. But it is not fair and not just, and you as legislators should not take that money from people who had a legitimate right to count on it, who had been promised and had legislation to back it up.

That is why I am saying that, as a New Democrats, we have difficulties with this bill. I've heard the taunts: "If you want this, just vote for Bill 2." But I cannot and I will not, in all conscience, vote for a bill that does something I believe is immoral, and I believe this to be immoral.

I am asking the members of this House to forgo the approximately \$125 million. I am asking the members of the government who are sitting here today to go back to the minister, to go back to the Premier, and tell them that the provisions of this bill are good and justifiable, save and except in the form of the retroactivity. I am asking for sane and sober second thought on this, and not just to look at how much money can be granted or how much money can be gained by the government, admittedly in these very difficult financial circumstances.

Having said that, I would like to close with a statement that was made by the Canadian Jewish Congress. I think the two gentlemen who appeared said it best, and I would just like to quote them for the record. This was Bernie M. Farber, executive director, and Simon Rosenblum, director of public policy and Israel affairs. I'm quoting from their document, page 3, because I think it says precisely what this government needs to hear:

"Retroactive taxation does not enjoy a good reputation. In many tax and economic circles, it is the equivalent of a four-letter word, and for good reason. Elementary fairness would tell us that there is something very wrong with changing the rules so that the previous

actions of taxpayers, based on the rules in place at that time, are penalized.... How in the world can citizens, taxpayers, be expected to act in good faith with the law of the land when a government is permitted to not only change the rules—which of course is," in general, "perfectly ... acceptable—but to change those rules retroactively? ... Neither a properly functioning political democracy nor a market economy can operate with such random and arbitrary actions."

I ask that the government reconsider this section, withdraw what I consider to be an odious portion and resubmit to this House a bill I can be proud to support.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie):** I am certainly pleased to be supporting Bill 2, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility. There are some very key sections in this act that we need to move forward on quickly, to address the large financial concerns we have regarding the auditor's report indicating the \$5.6-billion deficit we presently have.

We committed to the people of Ontario during the campaign that we would be rolling back corporate tax reductions, and we are following through on that promise. We also committed to reducing and eliminating the private school tax credit as we move forward. We also committed to increasing the tax on tobacco to bring revenue on line to improve our health care.

I find it rather amazing that the member from Beaches-East York would stand here and speak so supportively of the bill but split hairs when it comes to voting in favour of this. This is a very important process. If the member is that committed to public education, is that concerned about public education, is that serious about the lack of principles, the lack of funding and textbooks, and other concerns in regard to public education, then the member would stand in his place and vote in favour of eliminating the private school tax credit. The people of Ontario were very aware of where we stood on the private school tax credit. We said from the start that we would eliminate it, and we are eliminating it. People knew where we stood.

I am amazed that the leader of the third party would vote against eliminating the private school tax credit. For a group here to speak so avidly in favour of public education and vote against this bill is amazing—

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Contradictory.

**Mr Oraziotti:** Certainly, it's contradictory. That's a good word.

1650

**Mr Dunlop:** I rise to make a few comments on the member for Beaches-East York's speech here tonight. I understand he's basically supportive of the bill with the exception of the retroactivity.

I don't know why anybody would want to burden the taxpayers of Ontario with the largest tax increase in the province's history. That's what you're doing here tonight when we vote on this bill at 5:50. I fully expect that the whip will do his job well like he's done throughout this first session and you'll win this overwhelmingly. As a



majority government, that's your prerogative and your responsibility.

There are two comments I would like to make very briefly. One is that the only part of the bill that I personally support—and there's a condition with that—is the increase in the tobacco tax. I don't have a problem with that, providing there is some type of compensation for our tobacco farmers who have invested hundreds of millions in this industry. We look forward to compensation for the agricultural community and actually, for all of rural Ontario, because we on this side of the House think that you've let down rural Ontario with your throne speech. That is the only part of the legislation I agree with.

The part I disagree most with, of course, is the retroactivity on the education tax credit. This, as I said earlier tonight, will have a major impact on hundreds of families in our province. I'm disappointed, and once again I ask the members of the government to look to some type of regulatory change that may in fact reverse that decision.

**Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** I rise to speak in favour of Bill 2, a bill for fiscal responsibility. I think again today we saw evidence of the fact that we need to be fiscally responsible in order to deal with the kinds of promises we have made to our constituents and to the people of this province.

I would like to address the member for Beaches-East York on the retroactivity issue. I know that the whole issue of equity in education or the private school tax credit was a situation or an act in which faith-based schools were combined with private schools, and we have the previous government to thank for that. I know that the member for Beaches-East York mentioned the seniors credit and the small amount that most seniors would receive out of that and that only the wealthy would see the benefit of that kind of tax credit. I say to him, the same holds true in private school situations. We're talking about subsidizing not just families who are making major sacrifices to send their children to faith-based schools but also those who would gain substantially from this, who send their children to the Upper Canada Colleges of this province. I don't think that is equitable at all. There's quite a difference between the private schools and the faith-based schools.

As I said earlier, and I've told people in my own constituency, many who send their children to faith-based schools, that they are not getting the equitable treatment they deserve. We can't afford to do this in terms of giving monies to the wealthy. At this stage, I think we need to talk about the issue of dealing with this, but not by combining them together. Retroactivity means that these people are not going to see the tax credit that they haven't actually claimed yet anyway.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any further questions and comments? Seeing none, I'll recognize the member for Beaches-East York for his two-minute reply.

**Mr Prue:** I thank the members for Sault Ste Marie, Simcoe North and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I thought I had made myself very clear. Perhaps I haven't, so I'm going to use the last one minute and a bit to talk about the retroactivity provisions.

I commend the government for doing away, and I will say it again and again, with the equity in education tax provisions. They are wrong-headed. I do not draw the distinction between those who send their children to private schools like Upper Canada College and those who send them to faith-based schools. To me, there is a public school system that needs to be supported, and that public school system needs to be supported with all the strength and muscle and every tax dollar that this Legislature can find to give to them. I have no problem with this government, on October 23, doing precisely that. In fact, I would have done it myself were I in government.

But I will tell you that there is a problem, and that needs to be said again and again, with any retroactive provisions for any bill, whether they be tax bills or Criminal Code bills, whether they be within the purview of this legislation or within the purview of the federal House of Commons. Legislation that allows for retroactivity is bad legislation. It is legislation that will hurt people who do not deserve to be hurt. It will hurt those who are relying on the force and effect of law. They had a bill here, not just for this year; they had a bill the previous year that was 10%. Then it was up to 20%. They had every reason to expect that that would continue last January with the government in place. That is the problem and why, regrettably, I cannot support the bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 2, the bill that in essence restores an element of fiscal responsibility here in this province. As you know, every day we find out how monumental is the financial mess that this province is in thanks to the previous government, which essentially was not in control of its finances for obviously a number of years and in a number of areas. We've had to take some quick and focused steps in terms of rectifying some of the serious challenges facing the people of the province of Ontario.

This bill really is a reconfirmation of the clear platform commitment that Premier McGuinty put forward to the people of Ontario during the last election. That's what's in this bill. These are things that we campaigned on, and not only campaigned on; these were principles that we stood for in opposition, where we said we did not feel the province of Ontario could afford more reckless tax cuts. We saw in the eight years of the Conservative government that a tax cut equalled a service cut. That was a guarantee. When they announced tax cuts over the last eight years, within weeks we would see cuts in our schools; we would see cuts in our hospitals and our city services. That's why we in opposition opposed the tax cut approach, because we said there was a price to pay for those tax cuts, and that tax cuts are usually picked up by the working people of Ontario.

Certainly there are some corporations, mostly the large ones, that wanted more tax cuts, but in this bill we've said no. We've said no to further corporate tax cuts. That's one of the main provisions of this bill, because we need that money to be directed into our nursing homes, to be directed into our schools and our hospitals and our cities, into small northern rural communities that need services. That's where the money should go. The corporations, at this time, are going to have to wait. That's what we've told them: Wait. We've got to fix the financial mess that we're in.

That's why, reluctantly—and I know the member from York West here will tell you that a lot of our seniors wanted some kind of tax relief, some kind of help. Just before the last election, the Tories did some polling and found out, yes, seniors wanted tax relief, so they came up with this scheme to give all seniors tax relief.

**1700**

But it was refreshing to see, whether it was in York West or in the beautiful riding of Davenport, that the seniors were much too smart and said to us, "We know the Conservatives are trying to buy our votes, and as much we would like that tax relief, we know that we need home care, that we need good hospitals." So they rejected that attempt by the Conservatives to buy their votes because the seniors were much smarter than the Conservatives ever gave them credit for, thank God.

Sure, we would like to give seniors relief right now, but as you know, we have a \$5.6-billion charge, credit, deficit. Unless you wipe out that deficit, you won't be able to provide funding for the necessary programs in this province. It's evident that the previous government ran the government on Visa. That's what they did. They charged everything and they're paying 28%—if you pay it on Visa, you're paying 28% interest. Sooner or later, you can no longer use that plastic. They were running this government on plastic. We're at the point right now where \$10 billion a year is now going to pay the Tory Visa bill. Can you imagine what we could do with \$10 billion? In essence, in eight years, when tax revenues were flowing, when gaming revenues were flowing—I think it was \$4 billion a year in gaming revenues—they squandered that resource in tax revenues and left us with not only a deficit of \$5.6 billion, but left us with a social deficit. Look at the state of our social services. Look at our schools, our hospitals. They didn't pay the necessary attention to their financial management. They let this province essentially go into the red like we've never seen before.

As much as the Tories used to talk about the financial legacy of the NDP government, at least the NDP went through a huge, massive downturn that was almost of depression proportions. We've been saddled with this deficit of \$5.6 billion after going through eight years of economic prosperity. They have no excuse for leaving this \$5.6-billion deficit.

Then we found out yesterday that we have an added deficit of about \$1 billion over at Ontario Power Generation. To our astonishment, what we found out they were

doing there—this is incredible: They were monetizing their deficit over there. They were doing what the poor, out-of-work person does. They go to the Money Mart or Cash Mart and go, "Listen, give me an advance on my cheque. I'm going to get the cheque next week." Then they get, what, 80 cents on the dollar? Ontario Power Generation was in essence doing the same thing. They were saying, "Lend us some money. We'll pay you back when we get our receivables in a couple of months." The cost of that is astronomical. It's the type of thing companies do when they're on the verge of bankruptcy. That's what Ontario Power Generation was doing.

So it is an amazing legacy of deficit we're faced with, and that's why this bill was essential. We've had to say no to the tax credit for seniors, we've had to say no to private schools, we've had to say no to corporations and we've had to raise tobacco taxes. By the way, very few people on the other side talk about the real reason we're raising tobacco taxes: Tobacco kills 12,000 people a year in the province of Ontario. The Tories never talk about that. Twelve thousand human beings die because of tobacco-related diseases every year. It might be a good reason to raise tobacco taxes. On top of that, there are \$4 billion in costs to the health care system because of tobacco-related diseases. So if that isn't good reason enough to raise tobacco taxes—and I think they should be raised higher, because we do have the lowest tobacco taxes in Canada. The Conservatives are complaining that we're raising tobacco taxes, which is killing 12,000 people a year. It's our responsibility to do something about that and we're taking a small step here.

These are the essential parts of Bill 2. It's a first step based on what we ran on in our campaign to stabilize ourselves as we have to make more tough choices. As the Minister of Finance said today, we're not going to take the Tory approach of slash and burn. We're not going to be reckless. We're going to be balanced in our approach to try and stabilize our financial situation. We're going to try to take into account the impact on people and our institutions and our public services.

We understand that the deficit is a monumental mess and a monumental challenge, but we have the monumental will to reverse this deficit. We are committed to doing something about it, and Bill 2 is a clear declaration of our intent to do something about it. We are saying clearly to the people of Ontario, as we did during the election, we can't afford these tax cuts to corporations, to private schools. We can't do this now. We need the money for our public schools. We need the money for our health care. We need to fix this mess that we're in.

So this Bill 2 is nothing but a reconfirmation of our commitment to help the people of Ontario get their services back. It's not going to solve the \$5.6-billion deficit; it's not going to solve the \$800-million deficit in our hospital funding; it's not going to solve the Ontario Power Generation hydro debt of \$1 billion and counting. But if we don't do this, how are we ever going to even have a chance of dealing with those? You can't even



have a hope, if you don't pass Bill 2, of achieving those objectives.

Bill 2 is a very modest bill. If you don't support Bill 2, I just wonder how you're ever going to get to the other billions of dollars that we have to make up for so we can provide our services. It's just staggering to look at what we have in front of us, but on the other hand, we have a plan to deal with these challenges. This is the first part of our plan whereby we take it step by step and we do things that are difficult to do, but we do them. For all of these, we could have taken the Tory approach.

Remember, on top of these promises about private school money and seniors, they were going to give away money. Remember the mortgage scheme? These clowns were going to give everybody in Ontario money if they had a mortgage. Can you imagine the deficit now if they had given everybody in Ontario who had a mortgage some kind—they were going to put a cheque in the mail to everybody holding a mortgage to buy their votes. That's not even in here. Luckily, we didn't have to repeal that chicanery. That was probably the worst scheme of all, the mortgage scheme. They ran on that too, and they were trying to buy votes with those schemes.

Again, the people of Ontario said, "We don't care about your mortgage schemes. We don't care about your private school schemes. We don't care about your seniors schemes. We want good services, because we know your schemes mean that someone's going to get hurt and you're going to add to the deficit." The people of Ontario were right. The mortgage scheme: God save us from the mortgage scheme. That would have been a real treasure. Can you imagine what the deficit would have been if they had gone ahead with all that stuff? It would have been uncontrollable.

In fact, the Conservatives on the other side are still in denial. They don't even admit there's any deficit. We on this side are saying, "We wish they were right." The NDP are saying, "Well, you knew"—all of a sudden, we knew there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. We knew there was some size of deficit, but looking at the books now, we've seen there are not only deficits but program spending that is going to be difficult to rein in.

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The other thing we're doing in this bill: We're saying we would rather forgo the corporate tax cuts than sell off our assets. That's the other scheme that government was very good at: selling public assets. These public assets would generate tax revenues so you could build better highways and build better schools.

As you know, the sort of hallmark of the past regime was the giveaway of Highway 407. That was a public asset that is now estimated to be worth up to \$12 billion. They gave it away to a Spanish consortium, in partnership with a Quebec company, for \$3 billion. Remember when they told us in the House, "That's a great deal. We got \$3 billion"? A great deal for the taxpayers.

They did that because they were doing that chicanery with their budget-balancing schemes. They said, "The budget is balanced. Because we got the \$3 billion from

selling the 407, we balanced the budget." That's the type of questionable accounting the former government did. And they were ready to sell off more assets. I guess they planned to sell off the LCBO. I don't know what other public lands they would have sold off, what other highways they could sell off.

That type of accounting is not in Bill 2. Bill 2 is very straightforward. We're saying that in order to achieve some kind of level playing field so we can do more program adjustments and so we can start to ratchet down this deficit, we need to forgo these tax-cut promises that the previous government made. If you go through the bill, that's the essence of it.

There are some other parts that are included—I should just mention them in passing—really for the purpose of ensuring that things are still in place. For instance, the Energy Star-rated appliance rebate will be extended to March 31, so you can get a retail sales tax rebate. We thought it would be good to keep that in to encourage more conservation. The Energy Star-rated appliance rebate is in place until March 31.

The tobacco tax, as I mentioned, has gone up \$2.50 a carton. We've also amended the GO Transit Act, in essence giving municipalities the ability to partner with GO Transit for some cost-sharing models for GO Transit expansion at stations and so forth.

These are some of the other aspects of this bill. The bill, as I said, is not about trying to punish corporations; it's not about trying to punish seniors or people in private schools. We've said emphatically that schools that are private are going to have to wait; we've got the public schools to repair and fix. We know that in all our ridings there are public schools that are overcrowded, that are in bad repair, that don't have English-as-a-second-language programs and that don't have special education teachers. That's why we said we can't promise money to private schools when we have an obligation to fix our public schools.

In my riding, by the way, I have probably more private schools than most of you here—probably more than all of you combined. I had to tell people that I could not support—except for the member from Thornhill, perhaps—the money for private schools. I said, "I empathize; I understand the choice you make. But we are committed to fixing the public school system."

All these choices we made in this bill are things we ran on, like the public school tax credit. We said we would rescind it; we would repeal it. That's what this bill does. There's no money for private schools in this bill. That's what we said; that's what's being done here. We were clear for two years before the election. We're carrying through with our commitment that we were going to put money into public schools and public hospitals, and that's what this bill does.

We don't, as I said, think there are any quick fixes here, but this is the beginning of some solutions to the mess that we're in. We can fix this mess if we work together and we tell the people of Ontario straight: We can't afford to give you these tax cut schemes.

It's so clearly evident to everybody in North America now that the old adage of, "Tax cuts are the salvation of the economy," obviously doesn't work. The legacy of tax-cut/neo-con chicanery of the past have been proven totally false because they leave you with a deficit—not only physical, of \$5.6 billion; they leave you with a social deficit. Our schools are in disrepair; our hospitals are in debt; our cities are in disrepair and dysfunctional because of a lack of funding. That's the legacy of the neo-con chicanery. The Newt Gingrich school of economics failed miserably in Ontario. Mike Harris is a living disciple and proof that it doesn't work. We're here with the beginnings of an attempt to repair the damage. With Bill 2, we're saying forget the tax cut promises; we can't afford them. We need the money for your basic services that everybody needs—essential services: hospital care, home care, public schools, city services. Those are the basics. The tax cuts, we can't afford at this time.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I'm very happy to comment on the debate on Bill 2 and the comments from the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who certainly has given us a very creative version of the world.

One of the things that I'd really like to focus on in terms of Bill 2 is the 27% hike in taxes for medium-sized businesses in this province. That is very significant and is the thing that probably worries me more than anything about this bill. We have businesses around my riding, around the north, that are making business decisions about expanding, about whether they can go ahead with a new line or whether they're going to go underground with a mine, based on real costs. When they see that they have to pay 27% higher taxes on January 1 of this year than they would have under our government, that is a real, cold hard fact that affects their business decisions.

Where do you think you get your tax revenues from? This government does not have a revenue problem. This government has a spending problem. Look at your report from today, page 36. Your outlook for this year: \$75 billion in spending. Your spending is increasing 10%. That's what you have to control. That's what you have to get down to work and work on, the 9.7% increase in spending.

You want a \$5.6-billion deficit. On October 29, Mr Peters did a report. What was there? A \$5.6-billion deficit. Since then we've had a \$3-billion increase in revenues, and what are you predicting now, today? A \$5.6-billion deficit. Miraculously; what a surprise. If you keep saying it enough, I guess it will happen. You guys are really determined to have a \$5.6-billion deficit. Control your spending: \$75 billion. You are going to have record revenues this year. We've never seen over \$70 billion in revenues in this province, ever. If you controlled your spending, you could balance the budget, so why don't you get to work and balance the darn

budget, like you should be doing? Please, just get to work and balance the budget. We need you to do that.

**Mr Prue:** I rise to comment on the statements made by my friend the member from Eglinton-Lawrence. I have to keep coming back to this: Much of what you have to say is totally justifiable.

I look to what you said about the cigarette tax. We need to increase the cigarette tax—

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** Vote for the bill.

**Mr Prue:** If you separate off that one section, I'll do it. If you separate off the obnoxious section, I'll vote for the rest of it.

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Wouldn't that be something else.

**Mr Prue:** No, it would not.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I caution the members to direct your remarks through the Chair.

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**Mr Prue:** OK, what you have talked about in terms of the cigarette tax is absolutely right. Ontario continues to tax at a lower rate than all of the other jurisdictions in Canada. We need to do that; we need to do it fast. I would suggest that \$2.50 is probably not sufficient, but I'm not going to oppose the bill on that ground, even though it's not sufficient. I would hope that in the spirit of co-operation, as you promised you would do, you will take this matter back to the minister, especially in terms of loose tobacco, because there is a lacuna here.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Prue:** All right. I take you at your word. Thank you for that. There is a real lacuna here. You are going to cause young people to go out and buy, not tailor-made cigarettes but roll-your-own in order to save money. They'll get hooked just as fast, probably even faster, because most of those do not have a filter and most of those, if they pack it too densely, provide even more carcinogens than they would get from store-bought cigarettes.

There's no doubt you need the revenues. There's no doubt in my mind that you should be able to raise those revenues in a fair and equitable way. All I am asking you to do is to find another way that is fair and equitable and not to use retroactive taxation.

**Mr Ruprecht:** I listened very carefully to the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and he's absolutely correct. His message needs repeating, "Tax cuts didn't work." These tax cuts don't work. Why not? It was the Progressive Conservative goal, if I recall correctly, to bring our taxes down to the same level as—

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** Alabama.

**Mr Ruprecht:** —Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana. Does that kind of level of taxation attract investment and therefore jobs? The answer is absolutely no. Why not? Because investment is attracted by good health care, skills development, good order and good government. That's what we want to achieve here in Ontario today.

The tax cuts resulted in closing the heart of our community, our schools. We all remember, Mr Colle and I



remember. We actually created some demonstrations because we were requested to do that by the schools. We had to do it. Do you know how many people joined us in Ontario? Thousands joined us because you closed the schools. Your tax cuts resulted in closing the lifeblood, in taking and choking the lifeblood of our community in closing those schools. That's what this created.

Very briefly, I have one quick story to tell you. Your tax cut did not apply to small businesses, oh no. If Mr Colle remembers correctly, it was the exact opposite. You wanted to increase—

**Mr Colle:** On Main Street.

**Mr Ruprecht:** —on the businesses on Main Street. We had to organize more demonstrations, and do you know why? Because you didn't want to listen. You shut your ears and that's why we had to do it. The people were so upset in Toronto because of these increases that tax cuts did not work.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'll tell you, this has been interesting to listen to, especially the member from Davenport. You think you're going back in time, listening to this. I compliment Mr Colle for his comments and I'm certainly very supportive of the comments from my colleague the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, a person who knows what it's like to get up every morning, work hard in 80- and 100-hour weeks to maintain a small business. He comes from a family of people like that. Unfortunately—I happen to side with those types of people—when I see increases in spending like in this fiscal outlook today, which is putting the increase of spending at almost 10%, I think you should be ashamed of yourselves, first of all, for bringing this joke out today, preceded by the joke we've seen back from the professional consultant, Mr Peters, that you hired right after the election. When we see these types of numbers, it's actually disgraceful to the citizens of our province.

Second, if this government found our tax breaks and our tax credits so negative, one can only think that the intention Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have is to remove all the tax breaks that we gave the citizens of Ontario, which amount to about \$16 billion. So that's what Ontario citizens have to look forward to: tax increases after tax increases after tax increases. We know that's going to happen. We know that by your fiscal outlook. We know that you're trying to demonize our government by the comments we've seen not only here this afternoon, but in the fiscal report and in Mr Peters's report. That is obviously the intent.

I can only think of one thing when I hear about a tax increase. I think of a certain guy by the name of Dalton McGuinty standing in front of the citizens of Ontario, and what did he say? "I will not raise your taxes." Ladies and gentlemen, today you're looking at a \$4.1-billion increase in taxes. That's what we're going to see at 5:50 today when you vote on that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes in summary.

**Mr Colle:** I want to thank all my colleagues for their comments. I think they're all well taken and I appreciate your listening.

One of the things that I remember clearly during the committee hearings, and I know the member from Beaches-East York will remember, is that the Conservatives asked Professor Jack Mintz to come and speak to the committee. Professor Mintz is a neo-conservative type and he's the executive director of the C.D. Howe Institute. Jack Mintz—remember that name, member for Kingston and the Islands. The first thing Professor Mintz, a neo-conservative economist, said was that one thing the Liberals are doing right is they're deferring the tax cuts. That's what Jack Mintz said: "You're right to do what you're doing with this bill because it doesn't make sense when you're running a deficit as big as you are." Jack Mintz said that in committee, clearly and unequivocally. That wasn't our deputant; that was the former government's deputant, Jack Mintz. I don't agree with Mr Mintz on everything he says, but on that point he was unequivocal. We're doing the right thing by not proceeding with the reckless tax cuts.

If we talk about us having a spending problem, all I say is, look at the record of this past government after eight years. Do you know where you find the record? Go to your local school. See the potholes on the roads in your cities. Go to rural Ontario and see the services they're missing. Go to see the wall-to-wall gridlock. Go to your hospitals and see the waiting lines. Don't dare go to Emergency. That's the legacy of the failed tax cuts, of a Newt Gingrich type of economics, which is a clear and utter failure. That's the record of the last government, a record of failure—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

The member for Lanark-Carleton has 20 minutes.

**Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton):** I want to talk about one specific part of this bill. It's a very large bill; it encompasses a whole part of tax measures. The one that I want to zero in on is the education tax credit. I want to talk about this firstly from an economic sense, because the government has put forward the notion that by cancelling this credit, which is now \$1,400 a year, in some way this is going to enhance their treasury so they can give more of this money to the public school system.

We know that in Ontario it costs approximately \$7,000 to educate each and every student across our province. The tax credit for each student in the private education system is \$1,400. That means that if we transfer that student from the local Christian school, where it's costing the taxpayer \$1,400, into either the public system or the Catholic system, it will cost the taxpayer an additional \$5,600 for that child's education. This whole notion that by cancelling the tax credit there's going to be this huge plethora of money that is going to be there for the public education system is totally bogus, because two thirds of the kids who are in the private school system are from families with modest incomes, and they cannot afford the fees, which, as we know, are

being taken away from them retroactively, with regard to the \$1,400 credit, which is, in my view, unbelievably mean and nasty toward a community which had a government saying, "You're entitled to this credit. Make your decision on where you're going to send your kids on September 1, 2003, based upon that." And these guys yanked the rug from under them. The basic reason the NDP is voting against this, as I understand it, is on the retroactivity of this particular bill.

1730

One of the subjects we have not discussed very openly in this Legislature is the whole discriminatory aspect of pulling back this tax credit. We have two systems of publicly funded education in our province: We have the public system, which is a secular system, where children of all races and religions go to school together, and then we have the Catholic system. We have a Catholic system which gives priority to children who are Roman Catholic. It gives priority to teachers who are Roman Catholic. We as a Legislature voted to discriminate in favour of the Roman Catholic religion in 1986, when there was no obligation to do so. We made that move. I was here when we voted for it. We voted in this Legislature to discriminate in favour of the Roman Catholic religion in 1986, although we had no obligation to do it, when we extended the separate school funding. I stood in this place and spoke against that bill. I stood in this place and voted against that bill; 117 to 1. I voted against that bill because I didn't believe we should divide our children up into religious schools. We shouldn't divide them on the basis of their religion. Children should come together at least at one stage of their education and learn to trust each other, even though it might be in the high school, secondary area. But we, the Legislature, voted 117 to 1 to discriminate in favour of a religious school system. We did that in 1986. There was no obligation. That's what the Supreme Court of Canada said after. They said, "This is discriminatory."

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Who was the one?

**Mr Sterling:** I was the one. I voted against it. I'm proud of that vote. I was against dividing children on the basis of their religious affiliation. I don't believe in that.

But here's the crux of my argument. Once you do it for the largest single religious group in the province—43% or 46% of our province is Roman Catholic—and we made the decision in this Legislature to fund their system. We said that we were going to discriminate—

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Look at the BNA Act.

**Mr Sterling:** I have looked at the BNA Act. I have read the Supreme Court of Canada's decision. I have read the Court of Appeals decision, and I know what I'm talking about, Mr Gerretsen.

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** How about your own letters to the UN? Did you read those?

**Mr Sterling:** Yes, I have read the UN decision that says we are discriminating.

By the yanking of this particular provision, we as legislators, all parties, in effect have said, on the one

hand, that we are going to discriminate in favour of the largest group—and, quite frankly, I should mention that my grandchildren are being educated in the Roman Catholic school system.

**Mr McMeekin:** So you're benefiting from it.

**Mr Sterling:** I lost the vote here in this Legislature. From that point on, I would help both school systems with regard to what they're doing.

But what we're doing here—and what this government is doing here is discriminating against Jewish people, they are discriminating against the Islamic community, they are discriminating against the Dutch Reformed community. You are discriminating against minority religious groups who should have the right to have their own religious schools, because in 1986 we decided in this Legislature that we would discriminate in favour of the single largest religious group. Some 43% to 46% of our population practises Roman Catholicism.

You cannot have your cake and eat it too. You have to be consistent in this place. You cannot say, "We are going to allow religious schools that teach Roman Catholicism to the largest majority group. You can have your religious schools, but we won't give them to the Islamic group, the Jewish group, the Dutch Reformed group. We will not give them to the other groups."

This is discriminatory on the part of this government. That is the most distasteful part of this legislation. You are discriminating. You should read the Supreme Court of Canada's decision with regard to the past decision that this Legislative Assembly made.

I find it very—

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Outrageous.

**Mr Sterling:** —outrageous, what we're doing here. What we have is a record in this Legislative Assembly over the last 20 years now, because in 1986 we made this decision. We as legislators stood up at the time and said, "Roman Catholics deserve this public funding." They called it fair funding or equal funding or something like that and they said, "Yes, we're going to fund this group." Nobody mentioned that 43% of the people or the voters were Roman Catholic, but I had it in the back of my mind at the time that that might have a little bit to do with why the Legislature voted for a particular religious group getting their own school system.

I don't know how we can sit in this place and say to other groups who want to—and I believe in the Orthodox Jewish religion they have to send their kids to religious schools, according to their religion. According to what they believe in, they have to send them to religious schools, which is probably a greater burden upon them in terms of living within their religious principles than other religious groups. We're saying to the Orthodox Jews, "You cannot get any help from the government with regard to your religious schools," yet we did it for 43% of the population.

I find that so hard to understand. I find it so hard to understand any of the Liberal nonsense with regard to this, as to how they can stand up and say, "We're defend-



ing the public school system," because the Catholic school system is not a public school system.

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Yes, it is.

**Mr Sterling:** It is not a public school system, sir. It is not. Read the legislation. If your child is not a Roman Catholic, you cannot demand that your child go to that school. They can refuse entry to that child. There's no question; they can. Read it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Sterling:** No, it isn't open access. It is not. And if you want to teach in those particular schools and you're not a Roman Catholic, you cannot insist on fair treatment in terms of getting those jobs. You better read it, David, because I've read the legislation as well.

At one point when I was debating this in 1986 in front of this House, I said during the debate, "Some time in the future, we're going to have to extend funding to other religious groups, because we can't do this without being fair to other religious denominations." When it came along, I had mixed feelings, because my first positioning on that bill at that time was that I didn't like to see kids divided on the basis of religious teachings. I still don't like it, but there's something that comes before that, and that is fairness. You can't do for the single largest religious group something you're unwilling to do for the smaller religious groups. You just can't do that and be a democratic and fair society.

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In our Legislature, we're stuck with what they did in 1986. And what they did in 1986 was make a decision to favour one group, the largest group, even though there was no obligation to do so. Why did they do so? Because it was politically expedient to do so. That's why they did it.

**Mr Colle:** Why did Davis do it?

**Mr Sterling:** Why did Bill Davis do it? He didn't do it. Actually, it was the Liberals who passed the legislation in 1986. Bill Davis made the promise. I didn't agree with Bill Davis. If you read the cabinet records, you'll find my opposition therein.

I made it clear to the Roman Catholic school boards in my area, after this legislation passed, that I would continue to support them. I would go out and fight for them in terms of the funding they got for their system, because that decision was made here. I hold no grudge against the system; I think it's a good system.

But when we, as a Legislature, do something for the majority, we've got to do it for the minority. That's why this piece of legislation is so rotten. It's rotten because it smacks of discrimination, it smacks of political expediency. That's what we're doing in this bill, and it is disgraceful in my view.

I understand other matters deal with fiscal matters, taxes and those kinds of things. I understand the implications of those particular matters, but to me, they do not hit the moral principles, they do not hit the history of this Legislature in making one decision for a group that I now term is politically expedient because of the number

of them, but discriminating against other minority religions.

I hope this government wears this. I will go and speak to groups about the discrimination of this government against their particular religions. I will openly speak about that, because that's the case.

I would now like to share my remaining time with the members from Simcoe North and Erie-Lincoln, if there is any time.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'd like to thank my colleague from Lanark-Carleton for his comments because he made some very valuable points—and I certainly didn't pressure him to give up his time.

I think what's important here tonight is the direction we're going. Obviously, you as the government won the election with a majority.

**Interjection:** They can do whatever they want.

**Mr Dunlop:** You can do what you want; that's right. As I said earlier, I expect the whip will have everyone in here in a while to vote for Bill 2 and support it.

The Progressive Conservative Party will not be supporting this piece of legislation, primarily because we believe this tax hike—the largest tax hike in the history of Ontario—works against what our government achieved and will have a very negative impact on the citizens of our province. I think we made it very clear over the course of the debate and in committee that Bob Rae increased taxes by \$2.2 billion; David Peterson had the second-largest tax increase in Ontario's history, at \$2.8 billion; and tonight we're going to see a vote come through that will probably approve a tax increase of \$4.13 billion, the largest increase in the history of Ontario. That's very disappointing to our economy in particular.

I actually hope I'm wrong on this, but I think this will have a very negative impact on job creation in Ontario. As I look through this document that was passed out this afternoon, the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, I think it will impact revenues dramatically, next year, the year after and the year after that. That's when you'll go back to the trough, back to the people of Ontario, and as to all those tax breaks we gave the citizens of Ontario, trying to keep a strong economy, you'll go back the way the NDP did. You will continue to tax heavily and drive our country and our province into a deep recession. I hope I'm wrong on that. I think there's the possibility it may not happen.

Let's be serious about this. This is a large tax increase. It's contrary to what your candidates right across Ontario said between September 1 and October 2 of this year, when at various all-candidates meetings throughout the province you looked the people straight in the eye, Dalton McGuinty looked the people of Ontario straight in the eye, and said, "I will not raise your taxes." Over and over again on every TV station, in newspaper ads, in brochures: "I will not raise your taxes." Ladies and gentlemen of the province of Ontario, tonight, in less than 15 minutes, we will be voting on a bill that will increase your taxes \$4.13 billion, the largest tax increase

in the history of the province. This will have a negative impact on our economy and on the future of our province.

With that, I would like to see this last couple of minutes wrapped up by my good friend and colleague, the brilliant young guy, the former minister and the member from Erie-Lincoln, Tim Hudak.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** Thank you to my colleague from Simcoe North for some time to speak to this. It's still a bit smoky here in the assembly right now after we saw the finance minister, Greg Sorbara, cooking the books of the province of Ontario just a couple of hours ago—all kinds of hocus-pocus. Houdini would blush at the kind of magic tricks he's doing with the numbers.

If you look at page 60 of their Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, what happens? You overplayed your hand with this whole Peters thing. The taxpayers federation showed you, using the Liberals' own cooked numbers, that you could balance the books this year if you made some tough decisions. Using your own numbers, the Ontario Taxpayers Federation showed that to you, so Sorbara had to come back and say, "We've got to change the numbers, throw a few tricks in there, a little hocus-pocus there." Lo and behold, he got back to \$5.6 billion. I hope members across the floor can see me through the smoke and mirrors, through the smoke from cooking the books. Greg Sorbara performed an amazing magic feat today to get back, but I don't believe him. In fact, we saw the mystery man from the cabinet. Pinocchio showed up today, I think the 25th man in cabinet, Premier Pinocchio.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In accounting terminology "cooking the books," in its plain and ordinary meaning, is an inappropriate—

**The Deputy Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Hudak:** I appreciated my colleague from Lanark's comments on the independent school tax credit. You are going to be successful at ensuring that independent schools are only the refuge of the wealthy, taking that tax credit from hard-working middle-class families in the province. I can't believe that not one of you stood up to justify the retroactive tax increase—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr Prue:** As always, it is a pleasure to hear my colleague speak on this issue, or on any issue. You never know what you're about to learn. Going back, the member from Lanark-Carleton is one of the deans of this House. I think he is the dean of this House, having served here longer than anyone else, and he can tell us a little bit of the history of how we got here today. It was instructive to note the pickle the province has got itself into, in terms of having one religion have its public system authorized and others feeling quite badly about it.

I've had an opportunity to read the Waldman decision. I glanced through it again today. It's really quite instructive in terms of the fine wire that we in this

province must constantly be walking. On the one side, we have historical precedent, we have the British North America Act, we have the Manitoba schools question and we have all of those things that have brought about Catholic education in Ontario. On the other side, we have our fundamental rights and freedoms—the Charter—and we have the United Nations. They seem at times to be diametrically opposed. I commend the member for bringing it up, but I'm still not entirely sure of the relevance in terms of the argument. If the argument is that we should do away with all such schools in order to have just a public school system, I might see some considerable merit to that, but that is not what I am hearing from him. What I am hearing is that we further have to chop up into little tiny pieces the public school system to accommodate people of various faiths, various creeds, various beliefs, various financial backgrounds and institutions. If that is the argument that is being made, I cannot support that.

I would ask in future if he would give his considerable historical knowledge and be clear exactly where he wants to take his party and this province. If it is to one school system, I would very much welcome an opportunity to hear that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4, 2003, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 2, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility. Is it the pleasure of the House that motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes		
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldeep	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	McGuinity, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.



**Nays**

Arnott, Ted  
Baird, John R.  
Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Eves, Ernie  
Hampton, Howard  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Cameron  
Klees, Frank  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley  
Martiniuk, Gerry  
Miller, Norm  
Murdoch, Bill  
O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Scott, Laurie  
Sterling, Norman W.  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Yakabuski, John

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 64; the nays are 25.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion passed.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1805.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

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of Ontario  
First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario  
Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 17 December 2003

Mercredi 17 décembre 2003



Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 December 2003

# ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1845.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SUPPLY ACT, 2003

### LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2003

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr Sorbara, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 /  
Projet de loi 28, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2004.

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** Mr Speaker, congratulations on your assuming the chair.

It is a pleasure to speak to Bill 28, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004. Essentially what it does is give the government authority to spend the funds that are contained within the budget and the priorities that have been identified by the government.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** You want to spend the Magna budget?

**Hon Mr Caplan:** I hear my friend opposite. He's a veteran of many of these kinds of mechanisms.

One of the most important things that members of this Legislature do is go to the people of Ontario and say, "We have certain programs," whether they are hospitals or schools, health care, education, whether it's to have meat inspectors, of which our government of course has hired 100 more.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Caplan:** Or water inspectors. My colleague the Minister of the Environment hired 33 more water inspectors. Where the government spends the dollars shows you where its priorities are. But it must come for two things: (1) for approval of what are called "estimates," the budget projected for the coming year; and (2) for specific spending authority under what's called the supply bill, and that's what we're here to debate tonight.

As I did mention, my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Food has reversed a trend where the previous government saw fit to fire meat inspectors. Of course, we saw the potential for some very serious repercussions for public health and for our communities in the consumption of meat that perhaps had not been properly

inspected. I know there is a serious investigation going on, but the fact remains that we used to have in excess of 100 full-time meat inspectors in Ontario. The previous government, through measures like this, through the spending authority and through the budgeting in their day, saw fit to reduce the number of meat inspectors. That's not the priority of this government. We don't take a back seat to anyone, and we don't apologize for protecting public health. That's why I am so proud that my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Food moved to rehire over 100 meat inspectors.

The previous government did not have environment as a very high priority. The previous government literally fired hundreds of environmental inspectors. Of course, this was the subject of a judicial review through Justice O'Connor as a result of the tragic circumstances in Walkerton. One of the recommendations from Justice O'Connor is that the province needed to hire more water inspectors to ensure that our water in fact was safe, clean and fit for human consumption and would not kill us. I'm very proud of my colleague the Minister of the Environment for taking such very strong action to hire the water inspectors we need to protect public health.

The authority is contained in Bill 28 to allow the mechanism of government, to allow the spending authority, whether it's to hire nurses to treat our sick, to hire teachers to teach our children, to hire those very important public servants or provide the important public services that we require for public safety, for excellent health, for a clean environment, for all the things that we rely on and the excellent public services we need. Bill 28 does precisely that.

### 1850

I did want to get into one other thing. Of course, my time is very short and I know that several members will want to speak. We've seen spending authority used through something called a special warrant. This is where the previous government—prior to introducing their budget at Magna, the auto parts manufacturer, behind closed doors, with one page outlining their spending plan—went to the Lieutenant Governor and said, "This is what we'd like to spend money on. This is what we need to be able to do." So they got over \$36 billion in authority to go and spend the people's money, without seeking any kind of approval, without any kind of transparent or accountable process.

I think it's because of that sort of disdain for this body, for this Legislature, where we come and debate in a very open and transparent manner what our priorities are as a



government. That's the real contrast you're seeing here. This old, tired, secretive, unaccountable, opaque approach to public policy is very much different in a McGuinty government. Where we favour openness, the previous government favoured hiding under the secrecy of a method like a special warrant. I know my good friends opposite might want to talk about why they felt the need to engage in some of those different kinds of mechanisms.

It is my distinct pleasure to support this, and I hope all members of this Legislature will support Bill 28.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** Further debate.

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to this supply motion that's on the floor. It's a motion to approve spending by the Liberal government before the next budget. It is something I'm reluctant to consider supporting, considering some of the jiggery-pokery we witnessed today with the Liberal economic statement, for example.

With respect to this statement, on page 36, I raise the question, why are these people known as tax-and-spend Liberals? I look at this year's budget's total expense. We see spending of \$68.5 billion. I go to the next column, the outlook for the 2003-04 year, and they are planning on spending \$75 billion. That's an increase of well over 9% in one year. Hence the phoney deficit talk that we hear about so much and hence Bill 2, which would give them the tax hikes they seem to feel will bankroll this kind of spending.

I remind the House that Erik Peters, at the request of Dalton McGuinty, conducted a review of the 2003-04 Ontario fiscal picture. That review was as of October 24 of this year. He concluded a potential deficit of \$5.6 billion—we've heard that figure—if the current Liberal government elects to sit on their hands and do nothing for the next five months. Mr Peters' review does not constitute an audit, nor does he speculate what the deficit might actually be at the end of 2003-04—in other words, March 31 of next year. In his report, Mr Peters—again, the report was released October 29—concluded that if no action was taken to bridge the spending gap, the province risked recording a \$5.6 billion deficit, again as of March 31 next year.

However, Mr Peters' assessment was made without the benefit of Ontario's public accounts for 2002-03. These didn't come out until November 29, one month later. These are the final financial statements. They itemize the government's annual spending and revenue numbers. The release of the 2002-03 public accounts on November 29 transformed Ontario's fiscal outlook. This improved picture, together with recent federal spending announcements around health and the provincial tax increases they would be budgeting for, I would assume, results in a revised projected deficit of \$1.8 billion, again at the end of the coming year. In opposition, we all know that Mr McGuinty said he had a plan to deal with the deficit of up to \$2 billion.

In addition to higher provincial revenues, the federal government has said it will deliver \$771 million for enriched health care transfer. Regrettably, the McGuinty government decided to not record any of this money in the current fiscal year, preferring instead to pump up the deficit figure and, in my view, cynically make the fiscal situation appear worse than it is.

The new Ontario government has also tabled Bill 2, raising tobacco taxes, corporate income taxes, repealing the scheduled personal income tax relief, rescinding tax relief for parents with children attending independent schools, as well as any rent or property tax relief for seniors. The government estimates this would bring in an additional \$800 million, again through Bill 2, the largest-single-tax-hike-in-the-history-of-the-province-of-Ontario bill.

At the time, my colleague and finance critic, the member for Nepean-Carleton, said, "The Liberals think that tax hikes will prevent them from having to make tough decisions. The reality is, they will only drive jobs out of Ontario and stunt the growth of the economy. We need only to look at the legacies of Bob Rae and David Peterson to prove that."

I would encourage all the tax-hikers, all the promise-breakers on the other side of the House, to take heed of Mr Baird's advice. Truly the tax-and-spend legacy of economic downturn speaks for itself. Now, with the new public accounts figures in front of us, projected broken-promise tax increase revenue and the new federal commitments, Ontario is projected to have a \$1.8-billion deficit. Please remember: In opposition Mr McGuinty said he had a plan to deal with a deficit of up to \$2 billion.

As we on the opposition side of the House address this Liberal supply motion tonight, we're calling on the Liberal government to do what they said they would do. This may appear far-fetched. It may seem that in the wake of a broken-promise trail that criss-crossed the province of Ontario, wends its way across our province, we are asking the Liberal government, regardless of commitments broken very recently, to please roll up their sleeves, get to work, balance the budget, act responsibly and please act in the best interest of all Ontarians. Clearly the people of Ontario want a balanced budget. It can be done. The government can meet its promised commitments. Very simply, let's do it.

Based on the balanced-budget plan of the previous Eves government and the \$3.8 billion of in-year savings outlined in the Liberal financial plan, Ontarians should be able to expect as much as a \$3.9-billion surplus when the books are closed—again, this is March 31 of next year.

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors):** So what do you want us to do?

**Mr Barrett:** Roll up your sleeves, balance the books, get to work, and please cut back on the unnecessary spending.

What I'm hearing across the way is really not what we're hearing—no word of a balanced budget in the



fiscal year and certainly no word of a surplus. All we get are lukewarm assurances to get rid of the deficit as soon as possible; no deadline, no timeline. All the while, Liberals hide under their deficit blame game as they hike our taxes, spend their money, at a rate that would make a drunken sailor blush. I say that—people know I'm from Port Dover. My father spent five years on the north Atlantic, and I mean to cast no aspersions on sailors or merchantmen or navy men or commercial fisherman or any other women or men of the sea or the Great Lakes.

I would like to point out that the Liberals will have to change Ontario's Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act if, heaven forbid, they do decide to opt for multi-year deficits, which sadly will be the case if they continue down the present road. While the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act allows a new government to run a deficit in what remains of an election year, it also says that cabinet ministers face fines if they fail to balance the books in subsequent years, and it requires a referendum on any tax increases that were not part of the government's election platform. As we saw Mr McGuinty make a great show of signing and endorsing the act during the election, fiddling with the act would only add to the woes of a government that has already broken major promises and walked away from their word.

1900

There is a story that comes to mind. It's a very old, old story. I'm assuming many, many young boys and girls are glued to the television screen tonight just before bedtime. I would like to tell a story.

Once upon a time, there was a piece of wood. It was not an expensive piece of wood; far from it—just a common block of firewood, one of those thick, solid logs that are put on the fire in winter to make cold rooms cozy and warm. Anyway, jumping forward, this piece of firewood was given to a local carpenter, Geppetto, to see what he could make of it. It turns out Geppetto had an idea for that old block of wood. Again, I wish to quote from this ancient story: "I thought of making myself a beautiful, wooden marionette," said Geppetto. "It must be wonderful, one that will be able to dance, fence and turn somersaults." Now we're getting somewhere.

As soon as he gets home, Geppetto fashions the marionette and calls it Pinocchio. After choosing the name for his marionette, Geppetto set to work to make the eyes, and then Geppetto made the nose, which began to stretch as soon as finished. It stretched and stretched and stretched till it became so long, it seemed endless.

After some other sordid adventures in the story that I won't go into, Pinocchio's true nature began to emerge. After telling his friend a story about some gold coins he had, Pinocchio began to lie, according to the story. Money and fibs—the story's kind of starting to get interesting now.

I quote again: "Where are the gold pieces now?" the fairy asked. "I lost them," answered Pinocchio. But he old a lie, for he had them in his pocket. As he spoke, his nose, long though it was, became at least two inches

longer. "Where did you lose them?" "In the wood nearby," he answered. At the second lie, his nose grew a few more inches. "If you lost them in the nearby woods," said the fairy, "we'll look for them and for them, for everything that is lost is always found." "Ah, now I remember," replied the marionette, becoming more and more confused. "I did not lose the gold pieces, but I swallowed them when I drank the medicine." At this third lie, his nose became longer than ever, so long that he could not even turn around. The fairy sat looking at him and laughing—

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** He's supposed to speak to the bill.

**Mr Barrett:** I'm getting to the point. I'd like to use one more quote from this ancient story.

"Why do you laugh?" the marionette asked her, worried now at the sight of his growing nose. "I am laughing at your lies." "How do you know I am lying?" "Lies, my boy, are known in a moment. There are two kinds of lies, lies with short legs and lies with long noses. Yours, just now, happened to have long noses."

Over the last couple of months, I've been noticing some long noses in this place, and given the broken promises floating around, I'm really not surprised. Today, Premier Pinocchio made a special appearance at the east door of Queen's Park to reassure Ontarians that the Liberal government is committed to the promises they made during the recent election campaign. During the wooden boy's remarks, it became clear that these promises are simply part of a much larger fairytale, as his nasal organ protruded further and further from his face. It is clear that Premier Pinocchio intends for all Ontario taxpayers to pay through the nose for his inaction. I think that's a quote from our finance critic. Again, instead of rolling up their sleeves—

**Mr Colle:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think that's parliamentary—name-calling in the Legislature—especially in the context. I think that is not acceptable in this Legislature.

**The Acting Speaker:** I want to caution the member that he wants obviously to use parliamentary language while he's engaging in this debate. He knows full well it's inappropriate to call any member of the Legislature—to use unparliamentary language in describing him.

**Mr Barrett:** I withdraw, and again, I was making a direct quote from a very ancient story.

**Interjection:** Your nose is growing.

**Mr Barrett:** And that nose still is growing. Quite honestly, we do ask this government to keep its commitment to live by the balanced budget law. The response that we hear is, "We can't do that. We're going to have to change the law." How about asking the government to honour its commitment to hold the line on taxes? Again we hear, "We can't do that either." Seniors, working families, all job creators will pay more under this government, and I shudder to think of the long-term impact it will ultimately have on the automotive sector in our province, on the agricultural sector, the second-largest economic generator in Ontario.



Let's go down the list of promises. How about promise 71? We all remember that one, a promise to make sure the debt goes only in one direction: down. When my colleague the member for Waterloo-Wellington, who is presently sitting in the Speaker's chair, called for the adoption of a 25-year debt retirement plan to make the province debt-free by 2029, we were shown the depths of the commitment opposite: a whipped vote by the Liberals against the resolution.

We're not the only ones noticing these broken promises. We're not the only ones concerned at the spending trends the Liberals have shown and are asking to continue with the supply motion we are debating this evening. Many across my riding and here in Toronto have signed petitions I've tabled since this Legislature began to hold the government accountable. I have a petition that I've been reading in regularly asking the government to hold its commitment to a balanced budget.

Small business: I have a small-business petition. I've had a chance a number of times to introduce to this Legislature hundreds of signatures concerning the spending that's planned by this government before March 31. Recently I attended area meetings of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and had an opportunity to talk to many representatives of small business. We realize that small and medium business create 50% of the private sector jobs in the province. That's 1.1 million new jobs created in this province over the past eight years, the majority from small business. Small business tax breaks are currently written into legislation to take effect at the beginning of the new year. Regrettably that changed today with the vote on Bill 2.

I'll just move along. During the election, we all spent so much time going door to door. So many people who are home during the afternoon are retired people, certainly people approaching the age of 65. I think we all agree we owe so much to the seniors of Ontario. They have earned our gratitude and they've earned the right to a safe and secure retirement. For many, rising costs, such as property taxes, eat into their fixed incomes. We hear so much about fixed incomes when we're at the doors, speaking with seniors. The seniors' tax break process our government introduced was designed to be simple, to provide property tax relief and rent relief to all seniors regardless of their income or their economic status.

Senior citizens have contributed so much to all our lives, and that's why the Ernie Eves government passed the seniors' tax credit into law, very simply, to give something back, to allow them to remain in their homes, to retain more of the income they have saved over the years, and to continue to contribute toward their investments or to draw down or certainly to spend in their home community.

Just to review, we've talked about broken promises over the deficit and tax hikes, in a sense, by eliminating the schedule for seniors, all to cover up and to fund Liberal spending plans, plans they refuse to rein in while they cry foul about the previous government.

In conclusion, I will just mention briefly that tobacco farmers are also being hit to pay for this Liberal shopping list.

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Tell us about June 18, 2002: \$5 a carton.  
**1910**

**Mr Barrett:** I hear the minister opposite making comments. He attended a meeting where 1,800 tobacco farmers came out to protest and, regrettably, 1,800 farmers booed the Minister of Agriculture. That's something you don't see every day.

With respect to taxes, federal tobacco tax hikes—and maybe just for the record here, federal Liberal tobacco tax hikes have increased seven times: in 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, twice in 2001, and June 2002. As Ontario's tax on tobacco was linked directly to the federal tax rate in 1996 in the Ontario budget, the last six increases were automatically matched by the province of Ontario. That was the formula; that was the relationship.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate. The member for Kitchener Centre.

**Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm honoured to speak tonight on the supply bill. This is the first time other than questions and members' statements that I've had a chance to rise in the House. I want to begin first of all by congratulating you on your appointment as one of the Deputy Speakers, especially as a colleague from a riding next to mine. I also, though, want to begin by paying tribute to the people of Kitchener Centre who gave me the responsibility to represent them, one that I'm very humbled by and one that I hope I'll live up to.

The issue today is supply. In effect, what's being asked is for the Legislature to authorize the government to spend money. In a sense, we're going to be writing a cheque to the government to proceed with its spending plans. But what's at the heart of supply is the notion that the government is going to treat that money in a fiscally responsible way. It means that the government is going to deal with the finances of this province in a way which is transparent, in a way which is responsible.

I want to spend a few minutes tonight outlining how this has been one of the marks of this new Liberal government. I think in order to illustrate that, you almost have to go back to the election. When you think of the election, you can think of the very difficult messages that were delivered. I delivered some difficult messages at the door, and those messages concerned fiscal responsibility and tax cuts.

What it came down to is the simple fact that we couldn't afford tax cuts. I don't think there is any member in this House—perhaps the group over there in the corner—who is opposed to tax cuts. I would have loved to have gone door to door in my riding and told the constituents of Kitchener Centre that if elected the Liberals would bring forward massive tax cuts, just as the Tories were claiming they were going to do. But the simple fact is that we couldn't afford them. There was a reality in the province, and that reality was that our health



care was suffering, our environment was not safe any more and our education system was crumbling. Several months before the election, we had Dr Mordechai Rozanski come forward with the unfortunate news that our schools had been underfunded to the tune of some \$1.6 billion.

The province was in a crisis. We needed resources, we needed funding, and the people at the door were open to the idea that we simply could not afford tax cuts. The challenge we had was to go out and sell that message. We sold that message, and the voters came forward and obviously delivered us quite a majority.

I think the voters at the same time were also starting to get a little bit cynical about the former government in power, the Conservatives. I think we should just go through the litany of some of the things they had seen. First of all, we had the auto plant budget. I remember when the announcement came down from the Premier. I was a candidate at the time and I learned that the Premier was not going to call back Parliament, but was going to have a budget. I read that on the wire and I phoned some of my friends and said, "Boy, these journalists are bad. The journalists don't understand. The Legislature has to be sitting for a budget. They misunderstood it. You're reading it on the Internet." I'd like to apologize to the journalists, because I found out at 6 o'clock when I watched the news that I was not mistaken. This government was going to take the unprecedented step of having a budget outside the Legislature. I think that is when we started to see a degree of cynicism happening within the province. These fiscal managers, these self-proclaimed fiscal magicians or fiscal supermen and -women were no longer that.

When I went around in the campaign, I was able to tell people that it was the Conservative government that had added \$21 billion to the provincial debt. They had used \$1 billion in health care money to balance their budget, as opposed to giving it to the health care system. They had hired \$662 million worth of high-priced consultants. They had failed to collect at least \$400 million in corporate taxes. They had even broken their own Taxpayer Protection Act. I think on October 2 the people of Ontario said, "Hey, it's time for this province to get their fiscal house in order."

But that wasn't the end of it, because then we had the Peters report. It's funny how many people said to me after the election, "Don't go in and take a look at the books and have the Minister of Finance come out and say 'Oh, they're awful,' and all that; get an independent person." So we went to a respected auditor, Mr Erik Peters, and I think anyone who saw his performance in the press conference, where he stuck very much to the mandate he was given—he would not answer political questions. This was a man who came in to do a simple job, to say, "What is the state of the finances of Ontario? What is the objective conclusion that can be reached?" And we know what happened: He found a \$5.6-billion deficit.

We started at the \$5.6-billion deficit and then we had a closer look, and as we heard the Minister of Finance report today in his economic statement, what we also found there was a structural deficit. The simple fact is that this province is taking in revenues at a slower level than it is spending. If we freeze everything, we're still not going to get rid of this deficit. We're going to have to continue a deficit. We need further action.

That's not all. We found out there are other financial service liabilities. We have accumulated deficits in our hospitals and also in our children's aid societies. I recently had the pleasure of meeting with some representatives of my local children's aid society and they laid it out very clearly for me. They are mandated under the law to deliver services. They cannot turn away clients. They have to deal with any clients that come forward. But at the same time, the funding levels they are receiving are not allowing them to continue this service. They're between a rock and a hard place and they're running deficits.

We have the same thing with the hospitals. We had a ridiculous situation in the election where one of the hospitals in my riding opened up a new emergency wing. It was quite a tremendous opportunity to see that we were going to have a new facility in our community, but what the province didn't tell us is that although they gave the capital money for it, they failed to provide the operating funds to have the entire facility work. You actually had a brand-new emergency room facility that was operating with fewer beds than the old one. These were the ridiculous types of situations that were happening under the old government.

Of course, we had Ontario Power Generation. I want to take a few minutes tonight to talk about the recent, very disturbing findings we heard from the Minister of Energy. What we found is that under the previous government, a lack of transparency and accountability led to a serious waste of public funds which is actually threatening the sustainability of the company. The corporation faces a cash shortfall of \$350 million this year and up to \$750 million in the next fiscal year, for a total cash shortfall of over \$1 billion. This year, OPG faces a \$250-million after-tax loss rather than—and I stress this—the \$600 million in expected profits. This was supposed to be a cash cow, and what we found when we came in, shone the light of transparency and took a look at it was that it isn't a cash cow; it is a drain upon the public purse.

What we found is that the emperor has no clothes. For eight and a half years, I had to listen to, "Oh, you're a Liberal, you're a provincial Liberal, and that's good. Education and health care is your thing, but you can't manage the money. I may not like what Mike Harris and Ernie Eves are doing to our hospitals, our school boards, but the simple fact is he knows how to manage a dollar. He's the guy who knows how to balance the books. He's the guy who knows how to keep taxes low." They used to say it. Then we look at the truth and we find out the



emperor has no clothes. What has been the opposition's response? It's been to blame the government.

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I'm reminded of a call I got in the campaign. It was the last day or two. I've got to admit that I was exhausted and my nerves were frayed. I got a call from a fellow—I think it was a businessman—a gentleman in my riding, and he said, "I've voted Conservative all my life, but I want to vote Liberal. My problem is that I've been reading about this Fraser report, which is saying there's a potential of a big deficit and I don't know if I should be voting Liberal."

I had had it. My fuse was just at the very end. I said, "OK, let me just try to understand what you're telling me. You're telling me that for eight years we've had to listen to this Conservative crowd tell us that they were masterminds when it came to finances. All the books were balanced. Everything was going to be fine. We find out from the Fraser Institute, with Mike Harris on the board, that they might be running a massive deficit—and it's Dalton McGuinty's fault." Do you know what? The gentleman started laughing and he said, "You're absolutely right. I'm going to vote Liberal." I got one more vote because of it.

I've spent a few minutes telling the folks at home, the people in the Legislature, what the problem is, but a problem is only half the story. We need a solution. We have taken action. In the short period of time we've been down here we've taken action. The first bill, Bill 2, that we voted on a short while ago enshrined our promise not to proceed with tax cuts that we simply cannot afford. It doesn't talk about raising personal taxes—we've held the line on it—but it talks about cancelling some taxes we can't deal with: the equity in education tax, one that a number of people have raised here in the Legislature, and I've had constituents raise it.

I want to go on the record as saying I have absolutely no problem with an education system where people are allowed to make choices. I respect the fact that people in my riding want to send their children to private schools or religious schools. But the simple fact is, we need priorities, and our number one priority right now has to be public education. We cannot afford to put money into private education at this time. It doesn't mean there's something negative about what those individuals are doing, but they have to realize that there are thousands of pressures on any government, and we have taken public education as the centrepiece of it.

Second, we have the seniors' education property tax credit that we're not going forward with. I remember the days in the campaign when I would meet seniors. They would raise it with me and say, "We don't want that tax to go through because of a variety of reasons. First, because of our grandchildren. We have grandchildren in school and we're seeing the problems they're facing. We're helping them with their homework. We're seeing the shortage of textbooks. We're having to buy chocolate bars so they can have library books. We don't believe we should be taking more money out of the system."

The second thing they said to me was, "We went through the system and our children went through the system, and the fact of the matter is there were other people, seniors in generations previous to ours, who in fact contributed toward the system, and it's our responsibility to do it."

These are people who have faced the reality of the province. We don't have an endless supply of money. We are facing a deficit. We are facing concerns. We put forward the priorities that the people of Ontario wanted and we decided to go through with them.

What else have we done? What else have been our actions to try to deal with this fiscal mess? We've introduced legislation that, if passed, will ban partisan advertising. We've introduced legislation that, if passed, will give more power to the auditor to make sure that every cent spent that comes from the public purse will be spent in a responsible way and will be spent to provide the best services to the people of Ontario.

Finally, today in his economic statement the Minister of Finance outlined a four-point work plan, an aggressive work plan to deal with some of the problems. This spring we're going to have a wide-ranging consultation across the province, where we have the same sort of dialogue I was having on the doorstep about the choices we're facing. The Conservatives don't believe in choices. They tried to offer everything to everyone, and we ended up with the Peters report.

We're going to say to people, "What are the choices we should make? How can we address your priorities?" We're going to show restraint in our own house. We're going to get our finances in order and make sure that government funding is kept to a proper level. We're going to work with intergovernmental co-operation: How can we work with other levels of government to find efficiencies and savings? We're also going to try to redesign how government delivers services.

There's a real desire for some creativity and imagination within this province. I think this government, under the leadership of our Premier, under the leadership of its cabinet and caucus, working with the people of Ontario, is hopefully going to be able to find solutions. And the solutions aren't going to be traditional solutions. The mess is too big, both within the services we want to improve and in terms of the deficit we inherited. We're going to have to go forward, we're going to have to be imaginative, we're going to have to be creative, but most of all, we're all going to have to work together. We don't have any time left to exclude people, to create enemies of this government. No, we're going to have to reach out to everyone, from the poorest to the richest, to find ways to move forward. This is what this government is about.

That is why today I will be voting for this bill, voting for supply, because I think this government is going to behave responsibly when it comes to the fiscal management of this province.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** I certainly appreciate some time to speak on this bill and remind the House how disappointed I was today on Bill 2



being passed, taking away the rights of our Christian schools, our seniors being picked on and having the largest tax raise this House has ever seen. So I'm really disappointed in that bill being passed. I was pleased to be here to be able to vote against that bill.

When we're talking about money, I understand the Minister of Natural Resources today had an announcement for us. I had high hopes for the Minister of Natural Resources. I thought in his new post he would make some good decisions, but in the first decision the minister has had to make, he's erred; erred in his first decision. He's not going to reinstate the black bear hunt. I'm really disappointed in that. Being that he's from the north, I thought he would have understood that. I realize that the former Premier, Mike Harris, was the one who took it out. He was wrong then, and Mr Ramsay is wrong now. Two wrongs don't make a right, fellas. That's really unfortunate.

There are many more problems with today's announcement. It's hard to start on them. I receive lots of letters from municipalities and constituents in my riding regarding the spring bear hunt, especially in the Bruce Peninsula, and almost without fail they want to see the bear hunt reinstated. We're even getting bears now migrating down into Owen Sound and farther south than that. That's because there hasn't been a spring bear hunt and there are too many of them.

I want to talk about some main concerns in today's announcement. It said in their announcement that the MNR would take the lead in dealing with nuisance bears. Well, in my riding, this is already the case. The MNR in my riding is doing a reasonable job right now with the problem, but they're understaffed. They've been understaffed for a long time. They need more COs. Without hiring more conservation officers, which would go against McGuinty's promise to freeze public hiring—I noticed he hired some people for the Ministry of the Environment, so I don't know what to believe over there. One day they say they'll freeze the public sector and the next day is the big announcement that they've hired a whole lot of people for the Ministry of the Environment. Now they make an announcement that they're going to solve our problem with nuisance bears, but they don't have enough staff to do it. So I guess tomorrow they'll break their promise and they'll have to hire a bunch more people for MNR.

The second problem is, the government is going to establish an around-the-clock 1-800 number. This is going to be really good. As I'm standing in my house and this bear is coming through my door, I run over and dial this 1-800 number and say, "Please come and help me." I can't shoot the bear, that would be against the law, so I'm going to dial the MNR. Most of the problems with bears are in remote areas. So first of all, it's the middle of winter, I'm up in Tobermory and this bear's coming through my house, and I have to phone this number. I've never heard anything crazier in all my life. Who are you going to phone? Are you going to phone somebody here in Toronto, one of these Toronto members over here?

Are they going to come running up and make love to the bear? What are they going to do?

1930

The ministry has made a mistake in the past. They are up there doing the inbreeding of the black bears. Now we're going to phone somebody, "Come and get this bear out of my house." I'd like to know how that one's going to work—without costing us any money, mind you. There's no money out there.

The third problem is the economic problems in the north. A lot of outfitters depend on this bear hunt. They've been hanging on for a few years with a promise that this might happen. I think they have decided up there that if they had a change, maybe this Liberal government would change it and put it back in. What happened? The first chance they get to do that, they don't do that. I'm really disappointed in this government over there. They had a chance to make something right. The first chance the Minister of Natural Resources had, he let us down.

We've been let down by this government and we've only been here a month. How many promises have they broken already? I'm not saying that they promised to get rid of the bear hunt, but they promised to fix the problem. Well, I guess if you dial 1-800-BEAR, there's going to be somebody come running down the road to help you get the bear out of the house.

The last one—now, this is really a ticker; this is really going to be good: They are going to help the municipalities introduce a bylaw. The new plan states that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs—and I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here; if he'd listen—will develop a generic bylaw that municipalities could use to help prevent nuisance bear incidents. This is really going to be a good bylaw. The bylaw's going to say, "You can't be a nuisance bear. If you're a nuisance bear, we'll call somebody 1-800 and he'll come and be bad to you." Isn't this just wonderful?

I thought the Minister of Municipal Affairs had a little bit on the ball. He sort of let us down already with the Oak Ridges moraine incident. What next? Now he and the Minister of Natural Resources are going to make this wonderful bylaw that says you can't be a nuisance bear. That'll be wonderful to see. We'll get a chance, hopefully, to vote on that in here.

I think I've used up most of the time. I'll be looking forward to these guys coming up with this new generic bylaw to fix the bears so they won't be nuisances. I'm sorry that the new minister has let us down. I hope that in the future he won't make these decisions. He'll make them on his own, because I know this minister wanted to have the spring bear hunt, but again, the Premier's office has taken over and we forgot about democracy in this place again—representative democracy which they promised they were going to bring in better. They've broken those laws so many times, I don't think we'll ever get around to that. It's unfortunate this has happened. Again, another promise has been broken. No democracy here. They were going to fix that up and they didn't.



Thanks for the time. I appreciate being able to speak on it.

**Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge):** I see we've missed the opportunity so far, but I'm sure it's coming a little bit later for the third party. As a result, I'll just do a time check for those out there in TV land. It's 7:32 by this clock and we're here live on TV, so don't turn it off, but turn the lights down and unplug the beer fridge because some energy savings are going to be necessary.

I'm particularly pleased to stand and speak to the supply bill, as it's known in its short form, or in its long form, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year—that's not the physical year, not the traditional calendar. For those who aren't familiar, the fiscal year is from the end of March until April of the following year. This runs through to March 31, 2004.

The estimates are always a best analysis. They're never an exact science. It's what one can do as best they can at that point. It often requires supplementary estimates. We've had some of those before us as well. Unfortunately, we have to have supplementary estimates. If we got it right the first time, we wouldn't need those, certainly not in the magnitude that we're seeing them this year.

The bill itself deals with a number of matters. In particular, it deals with the expense of the public service. The public service across the province of Ontario obviously is critically important. As a matter of fact, it is the second-largest industry, in effect, in the country, second only to the government of Canada. So that's a clear indication of the role it plays in lives of people in this province and why we need to pay some close attention to their form and their function.

We have to look at the investments of the public service, not only the operating expenses that we deal with from all of the ministries and agencies and our transfer partners, but also the capital expenditures. It provides the assets necessary for them to do their job with.

So there are a lot of matters in the Supply Act that recognize expenditures that came through as part of a budget process. It articulates those in a form and fashion that adds definition for the various ministries, agencies and boards that have responsibility.

There was reference to the bear hunt just a few minutes ago, and we'll be dealing with that matter. Natural Resources has a budget of some \$164 million-plus on the operating side. That's one of the reasons why we need to upload that responsibility, to make sure we take care of those nuisance bears so they're not breaking into someone's kitchen, particularly in northern Ontario, particularly not the nuisance raccoons in Scarborough that are breaking into someone's garbage can. That will probably have to come next, since we're not quite in a position to be able to do that.

One of the important functions of government in the context of mainly the Supply Act, the supply bills and the finances is the Management Board of Cabinet, and that's

through the Management Board Secretariat. I'm pleased to be able to be working with Minister Phillips on Management Board, because their responsibilities extend to the controllership. On an ongoing basis, through members of cabinet—and I'm pleased to be able to join the member for Sarnia, I believe; I still don't have everybody quite right—Ms Di Cocco, on Management Board of Cabinet to provide some controllership over the expenditures of the province during the course of the year. It's an opportunity for a small group to provide some additional leadership to various ministries and agencies. As the ministers or their staff come forward, many matters are dealt with in the budget, but there is ongoing control in situations. We've heard tonight about the issues that have arisen with the children's aid societies and \$24 million-plus that are off-book, that are accumulated debt. Those matters are the types that are before the Management Board committee to ensure that those are before this Legislature, to ensure there are strategies in place such that children's aid societies continue to function and won't run out of money before the end of their year.

Through the Management Board of Cabinet the objective is to ensure that the government achieves its agenda. That's part of what we're doing tonight. The passing of this bill will continue to ensure we have the resources necessary for the government to achieve its agenda. Matters that come out of this Legislature will travel through budget processes and Management Board to ensure that the finances are in place, and ultimately come back here for the necessary approvals.

Management Board sets, monitors, adjusts and sends matters back for further review to make sure the monies are spent wisely. It puts hold-backs on monies so that we're sure we do the best we can to keep things in some balance. But we all know we're finding some very unusual situations, during the course of this year in particular.

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** Stranger and stranger.

**Mr Arthurs:** Curiouser and curiouser—or stranger and stranger, I guess are pretty good descriptions.

Nonetheless, we'll get through the Supply Act, the economic review and financial statement. The Minister of Finance and his staff and cabinet turn their undivided attention, with the assistance of caucus and committees, to the opportunity to build a solid budget as we move forward in 2004-05 to provide the services the people of Ontario expect, particularly in the areas of health, education and environment, and to continue to build strong communities.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I'm very pleased to join in the debate this evening on Bill 28, which is a supply motion, which more or less enables the government to spend money. I would like to point out that this is probably the main problem this government has: It's spending too much money. They're going to have record revenues this year, revenues of over \$70



billion, and yet they're still saying they're going to have a \$5.6-billion deficit.

Let's look at what has happened since the government was elected. The government was elected October 2, and they started off by breaking a promise right away. They hired a consultant. They hired the past Provincial Auditor, Erik Peters, to prepare a report on the financial situation of the province. While Mr Peters used the most up-to-date figures he had, he based his estimates on what might be the situation on March 31, 2004, on the interim budget figures. With some fairly fancy accounting, he came up with a possible deficit of \$5.6 billion.

1940

Since October 29, when that report came out, we've had the release of the actual public accounts for 2002-03. From that, we can get a much more accurate picture of what's going to happen this year. What did these actual public account figures tell us? Well, last year, tax revenues totalled \$68.6 billion, \$2.2 billion more than the government's interim figures.

In addition to that, we've had tax increases, Bill 2 that just, regrettably, passed today, and also federal transfer payments; I believe \$771 million, just the health transfer alone. With the new projected revenues for the year ending March 31, 2004, which are much more accurate now, we should have \$70.29 billion in revenue. That is record revenue. Balancing the budget simply requires the government to control spending, to live within its means and to spend that amount of money so they have a balanced budget.

Look at what this government has done in two and a half months and compare it to the new Prime Minister of Canada, Mr Martin, who has been the Prime Minister for but a few days. Within hours of becoming Prime Minister, he cut the \$40-million sponsorship program, a controversial program. He has frozen hiring. He is reviewing all spending in the federal government because he realizes they have a very slim surplus at this point and he's hoping to contribute \$2 billion toward health care at the provincial level.

The Ontario government has a spending problem; that's the thing we have to deal with. We have record revenues this year. The Minister of Finance needs to act to control spending. He has to make sure spending doesn't exceed the \$70.29 billion this year. Government needs to live within its means, just like families in this province live within their means.

I refer to a National Post article, "Ontario's Deficit Cut Down to Size," by John Williamson and Bruce Winchester. "When Ontarians elected Liberal Dalton McGuinty Premier in October, his government's first challenge was to determine the size of the province's deficit. This was easier said than done. Pumping up the deficit of a defeated government had become a tiresome trend in Canada, and one that taxpayers no longer accept. Premier McGuinty, however, handled the problem deftly by hiring former provincial auditor Erik Peters to review the budget....

"Mr Peters' assessment was made without the benefit of Ontario's public accounts for 2002-03. These are the financial statements itemizing the government's annual spending and revenue numbers. But since they were not available, Mr Peters instead used the best available data, the interim budget figures."

"The release of 2002-03 public accounts on November 29, transformed Ontario's fiscal outlook. The statements revealed that transfers and tax revenues totalled \$68.609 billion last year, \$2.2 billion more than the government's interim figures. This improved picture, together with recent federal spending announcements and provincial tax increases, means the province will collect \$70.29 billion in revenues this year, a \$3.09 billion improvement over Mr Peters' revenue forecast of \$67.2 billion. The result is a revised projected budget of \$1.8 billion this year.

"How can we be so sure revenues remain strong this year based on data from last year? Because in the last 10 years, Ontario's own source revenues never declined from one year to the next—even when the government was reducing taxes.... There is no cause to believe revenues will suddenly drop wildly.

"In addition to higher provincial revenues, the federal government has said it will deliver \$771 million to Ontario for an enriched health care transfer in the current fiscal year. Regrettably, the McGuinty government has decided it will not record any of this in the current fiscal year, preferring instead to pump up the deficit and make the fiscal situation appear worse than it is."

And it goes on and on. The gist of it is, the government could go a long way toward balancing the budget and yet does not seem to be making an attempt to, by any stretch of the imagination.

I'd like to talk briefly about today's Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, which I think they could have done a week after they were elected, based on what's in it. There's not a whole lot of substance. But surprisingly, this \$5.6-billion figure comes out again. They report at the beginning of this statement that, given the history that Erik Peters reported, there could be a deficit of \$5.6 billion in the current year. Then a month later, after they'd done their economic outlook, even with the benefit of the real numbers now, they still have a \$5.6-billion deficit, even though there has been a \$3-billion increase in revenues.

It's obvious when you look at this that they're trying to blame the past government. In the throne speech they mentioned "inherited deficit" 12 times. The word "deficit" was used 24 times. In the 1995 throne speech—I wasn't around then—when the Conservative government came upon the scene, when there was a real \$11-billion deficit, guess how many times the word "deficit" was mentioned in the throne speech? One time. Don't tell me that they are not trying to shift the blame to the past government to get out of acting.

Today we saw Bill 2 pass, which was the tax hike bill. This is a bill that has me really worried. The thing that



people don't realize is that for medium-sized businesses, those businesses that are so important to our economy, effective January 1, 2004, they are going to be paying 27% higher taxes than they would have under the past government. That's 27%. I've met with companies in my riding, I've met with mining companies in the north, and they're making business decisions all the time. They're deciding whether they go underground; they're deciding whether they add a new line to expand. When they're making that business decision, that 27% increase in taxes will play a big part in the go or no-go decision.

So the report today really did not say a lot. Miraculously, even though there's been a huge increase in revenues to the province, the deficit figure comes out the same, for some strange reason. If you look at page 36 in the more detailed economic outlook and fiscal review, what you see is that spending is increasing dramatically—absolutely dramatically. The outlook for this year is \$75.153 billion in spending. That's basically a 10% increase in spending. What I say is that this government has to control spending. It's obvious when you look at those figures. They have to get down to work and control spending. They really have to get serious about this.

My father was the finance minister in this province for five years. Back in those days, of course, it was the Treasurer of Ontario at that point. He was finance minister from, I think it was 1978 to 1983. The whole time that he was finance minister, they were working diligently toward getting a balanced budget and they were very close to doing that. They would have balanced the budget by 1986. Then the David Peterson Liberals formed the government. They had a great opportunity in boom economic times to balance the budget. What did they do? They went on an orgy of spending. They really established themselves as tax-and-spend Liberals. It totally blew away the opportunity to be responsible and to balance the budget. I say that that is what this government is doing now. They have record revenues projected for this year: over \$70 billion. They need to control spending.

It is my belief that this government wants a \$5.6-billion deficit no matter what. It doesn't matter how much spending goes up; come hell or high water, they're bound and determined that they're going to have a \$5.6-billion deficit. If they repeat it enough, then they will have that. They're using it as an excuse, really, to get out of election promises.

Let's remember that Gerry Phillips sat on the estimates committee back in June—on June 4, I think it was—of this year as the opposition finance critic. He stated—and it's on Hansard in the estimates committee—that at that point he believed there was a risk of a \$5-billion deficit. Then the Liberals went out in the election campaign and campaigned saying that they figured there was a \$2-billion deficit and that they would be able to fulfill all of their election promises.

**Interjection:** How much did they promise?

**Mr Miller:** Some \$11 billion in election promises. They were going to be able to fulfill all of these election promises. They had, in fact, had the whole campaign platform audited, and this was something that they were going to do. Now they're the government and what happens? Well, their promises are dropping like flies. The government is using the excuse of this \$5.6-billion deficit and that's why, no matter how much revenue comes in, they're going to make sure they have this deficit.

But look at the promises that they've broken: hydro rates. They campaigned saying that they were going to keep the electricity cap. Now, whether you agree with it or disagree with it, the fact is, they campaigned saying that they were going to keep the 4.3-cent price. For most people in the north, the price is going up 28%, to 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour. You have to remember that in the north of course it's colder and we don't have natural gas lines running by our doorstep in many places. So we tend to use a lot more than the 750 kilowatt hours per month.

#### 1950

The Oak Ridges moraine: They were going to stop all construction of the 6,600 homes on the Oak Ridges moraine. We know that promise has fallen by the wayside.

The much-publicized signing of the taxpayer balanced budget declaration: We now know they're breaking their balanced budget pledge and in fact maybe not even balance the budget next year, which is the scary speculation I'm seeing in the press. No tax increases: Dalton said, "I won't raise your taxes, but I won't lower them either."

We haven't heard much about the 407 lately. I thought they were going to freeze and then drastically lower the cost of the 407. I haven't heard a darned thing about the 407 lately. Just today, they announce that no, they can't do the two cents off the gasoline tax for transit, which I believe was another election promise.

What about the P3 hospitals? I mean, they made such a minor change on that. I think you'd have to be an accountant to figure out what their change was. I don't think there's any substantive change in terms of P3 hospitals that they made such a big deal about.

What about ODSP, Ontario disability support program, and Ontario Works? I thought they were going to increase it as soon as they got elected. I haven't seen anything to do with that.

What about the full inquiry that they promised for the deadstock scandal at Aylmer? Somehow that disappeared.

So the government says one thing to get elected; they do another once they're elected. I'm afraid that makes people very cynical of politicians. That is a reason for people not to vote, when they see politicians saying basically anything they can to get elected and then, once they're the government, their promises fall by the wayside.

One thing: Whether you liked Mike Harris or not, he kept his promises. "Promises made, promises kept." The Liberals are very quickly establishing themselves as promise-breakers. "Promises made, promises broken."



Unfortunately, some of the promises they are keeping are not good ones. I'm reading from the National Post of November 26:

**"Liberals' Kept Promises as Bad as Broken Ones: McGuinty Medicine of Taxes, Pricey Power Threatens Economy...."**

"The Toronto media are filled with laments that Mr McGuinty is not doing the impossible things he said he would do if elected. He said he would reverse two hospital public-private partnerships; now he says he won't. He promised to kill a major real estate development just north of Toronto; now he says he can't. He promised a balanced budget; now he won't. He said electricity prices would stay frozen; they're rising...."

"The enthusiasm with which the province's finance minister, Greg Sorbara, has endorsed corporate tax increases casts doubt on his grasp of his material. Hints of his detachment from economic reality have been around for weeks. One was his comment that increasing corporate income tax rates from 12.5% to 14%, rather than cutting them to 8%, was essentially a meaningless sideshow." I'm sure that is not the case. "My own sense is that Ontario businesses are fully aware of the impact which I don't think is going to be detrimental to the economy in any way."

"That's what all politicians say when they set out to undermine growth by grabbing tax revenue from the corporate sector. In a statement this week introducing his so-called 'fiscal responsibility act,' Mr Sorbara called his tax increase a 'rollback ... of the tax giveaway to corporations.' Obviously Mr Sorbara hasn't been keeping up on tax policies, otherwise he'd know that the taxes he plans to raise are destined to kill jobs and lower growth in a province that is already suffering from destructive levels of taxation."

I could go on and on with that one, but—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Miller:** Continue? OK.

"The report, along with the research study by Jack Mintz and Dunajie Chen, suggests Mr Sorbara needs to catch up on facts behind Ontario's tax burden. Contrary to the dominant conventional wisdom, Ontario's tax burden is massively higher than five of its major competitors in the United States. Taxes on labour are higher, taxes on corporations and capital higher still...."

"By raising taxes on corporations, the McGuinty government is setting the stage for lower private sector investment, fewer jobs and lower tax revenues in future. The decision to maintain personal income tax rates and punitive surtaxes also serves as a damper on investment and economic performance."

I think the government just doesn't get that. They think they can just raise taxes and it doesn't affect things, when it really, really does affect things.

Those companies that are making business decisions about expanding, about adding new lines, they look at paying 27% higher taxes, and it's a numbers decision. If there's no money left over at the end of the day because it's all going to pay taxes, they don't reinvest in the new

machinery they need to become more productive and they don't expand the line. That's the unfortunate reality I don't think the government quite realizes.

Why do you think in the last eight years we had 1.1 million new jobs created at a time when there were tax reductions? That was a real success story, and the government just doesn't understand that. I worry about their tax increase. Things have been pretty good in Ontario the last few years. When the government increases taxes 27% on business, that will have a detrimental effect, and I don't think they fully understand that.

From The Ottawa Citizen, Friday, September 12, an article by Randall Denley:

"The problem with McGuinty's plan is it reflects a misunderstanding of how the economy works and how wealth is generated.

"When corporations pay tax, it reduces their ability to grow, or pay to their shareholders in the form of dividends. The Tories are fond of saying tax cuts create jobs, but their critics scoff at the idea. Think about it, though. Every dollar paid in taxes limits the money that's available for reinvestment in equipment, new technology and more workers. That growth and reinvestment creates an expanding economy, which enables government to meet the continually increasing costs of public services."

That's why we've had, in the last number of years, \$17 billion in extra government revenue through taxes, even at a time when tax rates were being reduced.

"The Liberals argue that corporate tax rates in Ontario are already low compared to the U.S., but they don't take into account the fact that most American states don't have a capital tax on corporate assets, and they allow rapid depreciation of equipment, another significant tax reduction. A study earlier this year by the C.D. Howe Institute concluded that, taking the full range of taxes into account, Ontario's effective rate of taxation and business investment is actually third highest in Canada, exceeded only by the economic powerhouses of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Even if the Tories' planned corporate tax cuts all go ahead, the province's businesses will still be paying more taxes than the national average." I think that's something this government just fails to grasp.

I really think that what this government needs to do is control spending. This year we are about to have more tax revenues. Over \$70 billion in tax revenues come into the Minister of Finance's control, and yet this government seems bent and determined that no matter what happens they're going to have \$5.6 billion—

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Five point six billion.

**Mr Miller:** Yes, we heard the finance critic saying, "\$5.6, blah, blah, blah, \$5.6, blah, blah, blah." No matter what, you guys are going to make darned sure that we have a \$5.6-billion deficit, and you'll spend every dime to make sure that we have a \$5.6-billion deficit. I'm sure you're capable of doing that. You need to control your spending. You can't spend \$75 billion. Control your spending and balance the budget. Be responsible.



Just last week we had Ted Arnott, the member for Waterloo-Wellington, introduce a responsible private member's bill to pay off the debt of this province in 25 years. What happened?

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I apologize to the speaker. I can barely hear the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. I would ask all members to come to order.

**Mr Miller:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I was talking about the member for Waterloo-Wellington and his private member's bill that he introduced last week on Thursday morning in private members' business, an excellent bill to act responsibly and reduce the debt of this province to zero over 25 years, the way most homeowners do in this province when they have their mortgage on their house; they pay it off. It's the responsible thing to do. The problem is, governments tend to think in four-year cycles, not over 25 years. Think about it. This year we'd have \$8.6 billion more to spend on the important programs if we did follow that responsible path.

But what happened? The Liberal government, on a private member's bill, had a whipped vote to vote down a private member's bill. I thought this was the time of democratic renewal, when we had more democracy in this place, yet the Liberal government whipped the vote and defeated that very responsible bill from the member from Waterloo-Wellington.

This government needs to control its spending and spend within the \$71 billion they have to spend this year.  
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**Mr McMeekin:** Elections are always about trust and frequently about competing visions and also often about hope. As I went door to door in the great riding of ADFA, we heard a lot about the hopes and dreams of the people there: hope for improved health care; a government that would set about the task of fixing education; hopefully a government that would give people the straight goods; and a government that would commit to living within its means.

I also heard, as I went door to door, a request that we work at trying to set a course to see a return of civility and stability and even some decency in political life. I said to the voters there that I would do my best to reflect their views and hopes, and I rise in my place tonight in an attempt to do that.

While it's fair to be critical, it's also critical to be fair. In fairness, the problem wasn't always what the previous government was trying to do. I concede that after the tumultuous and, in their own defence, challenging NDP years, changes were needed. I know that's a bit of a shock coming from me. I'm not supposed to stand in my place and admit that the Tories can do anything right, but let's face facts: Many Ontarians believed that some reforms were needed, and many supported at least some portions of the Tory platform. That's why there were two consecutive majority governments.

**Mr Barrett:** You should talk to your municipalities about amalgamation.

**Mr McMeekin:** You made some serious mistakes, that's true. You couldn't forge a coalition of the forgetful for a third time.

The real and more important issue was the way the previous government went about what they were doing. Speaker, I know you know, because you and I have had these kinds of conversations, that there are two ways to approach any difficult problem: One is to focus on the problem and get people working together to find solutions; the other is to pick a villain, point fingers and work at setting people to fighting among themselves. The first approach, it's been my experience, builds lasting solutions and, because people are working together, forges stronger communities at the same time. The second approach sets people against each other and tears communities apart. The member mentioned amalgamation—a good example.

It's clear to even the most casual observer which approach the previous government favoured. In case after case over many years, they opted for the finger-pointing. Is there any one of us who hasn't felt this personally? Everybody I talk to has their own health care horror story: desperately ill people sitting for hours in emergency rooms; months-long, sometimes years-long, waiting lists for life-saving treatment; a loved one lost because the resources that could have saved a life simply weren't available.

The previous government started by blaming the nurses. Remember that?

**Mr Colle:** Yes, they were like Hula Hoop workers.

**Mr McMeekin:** Yes; then the doctors and then the hospital administrators. It seemed that the previous government had their own form of no-fault insurance. Whenever anything went wrong, it was somebody else's fault. But who slashed nursing budgets? Who drove the nurses out of Ontario? Who made it possible for wealthy people to come across the border and use the medical equipment in our hospitals that we were not allowed to use because the previous government wouldn't let hospitals hire enough staff to run them? What strange logic was it that turned sick people away from emergency wards and define that a success?

The pattern was the same with education. Instead of working with parents and teachers to bring about needed change, they worked to set parents and teachers against each other. Remember? Teachers were targeted, and their abilities, dedication and competence were all questioned.

Sure, the government guaranteed funding for the classroom, but the classroom apparently didn't include the library or the librarian.

**Mr Colle:** Or the caretakers.

**Mr McMeekin:** Or the caretakers or the guidance counsellor or the music specialist or the special education instructor. Instead of working with school boards, the previous government chose to trap school boards by forcing them to close schools that had any excess capacity. Not much imagination there, folks.

I could reference some of the horror stories related to the supervisors closing rural schools, like Linden in my



area. The supervisor came in at the direction of the previous government and wanted to close five of six public schools in Dundas and one of the two high schools.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** We're fixing that now.

**Mr McMeekin:** We are fixing that now; yes, we are. We're getting at that. That's why we declared the moratorium the other day, right? Good move for us. I know the member opposite understands that.

In short, under the previous government school boards became the bad guys, even though they had little choice in the matter and neighbourhoods began to fight against each other—Mike, do you remember?—to see which community school would be allowed to stay open. What a shameful legacy.

I don't want to suggest that none of the issues we face have easy or obvious solutions, but we can and ought, if nothing else, to commit to working together to promote the values we share and make our communities stronger in the process.

**Mr Marchese:** That's beautiful.

**Mr McMeekin:** Thank you.

I want to be part of a government that has people clapping hands, not shaking fists. I want to be part of a government that develops and advances policies that build up communities, not tear them down. I want to be part of a government that understands that our greatest asset is our people—

**Mr Marchese:** Exactly.

**Mr McMeekin:** "Right on," says the honourable member—a government that understands that good public policy isn't measured by how many gifted citizens are blocked from the policy table—

**Mr Marchese:** No, siree.

**Mr McMeekin:** No, siree—but rather by how many gifted people we can include around that table.

**Mr Marchese:** Yeah.

**Mr McMeekin:** Right? The member opposite knows about that.

There have been some real efforts to make this place work better by being more inclusive and by sharing.

I want to be part of a government that isn't afraid of its own people, a government that's prepared to dream with and work together with all people of goodwill to once again make Ontario, as Premier McGuinty has said over and over again, a place to envy.

All around us the currents of history are churning into rapids. We know that change is inevitable and that the art of living demands that we co-operate gracefully with the inevitable, but strangely many of us have a great deal of difficulty accepting change. I think we've seen some of this denial here.

To accept change means you've got to understand that people, particularly in a country like ours, have the right to make a choice, and on October 2 the people of Ontario made a very, very important choice.

**Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** A good choice.

**Mr McMeekin:** "A good choice," my colleague from Hamilton West adds—quite appropriately I think. Thank you.

The previous government deserved to be held accountable, and they were. Their Road Ahead was exposed for what it was: a dead-end street. The fiscal deficit was bad enough. There are two kinds of attention deficit disorder: the medical kind and the kind we saw practised by the last government. They spent so little attention on the deficit that we've got so much disorder and chaos now to try to fix.

**Mr Marchese:** It was pathological.

**Mr McMeekin:** I think so. But even worse than that, and more tragic, was the social deficit that was left.

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**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** You played tricks with the books.

**Mr McMeekin:** Right on, these tricky guys.

We need new measures of progress that involve the standard of care we set for the least privileged among us. This involves our having to force ourselves, in spite of the difficulties fiscally that we have, to take on the social deficit, to look at the nursing home issue, to look at childhood development and the kind of issues around autism that have been articulated, to provide help for our senior citizens and changes to the Ontario drug benefit program, to improve economic conditions by hauling down the barriers which marginalize those with physical and mental disabilities. You don't do that by hiding the reports on the status of mental health in Ontario. That's another thing this government has done; we released those reports.

It means shorter waiting lists and swifter access to surgeries and other needed medical services. Our new Prime Minister, the Honourable Paul Martin—

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** Right Honourable.

**Mr McMeekin:** The Right Honourable Paul Martin, a man and a new government we look very much forward to working with, perhaps said it best: "We can never forget that our health care system is one made blind to income so that its eyes can be fixed on need." We on this side of the House share the concern to protect universal, high-quality health care.

I don't believe in trickle-down, voodoo or déjà-voodoo economics. I don't believe in right-wing dogmatism. There are too many giant sponges at the top for trickle-down economics to work these days. I do not believe that rising levels of inequality speak to a healthy society. Nor, my friends, do I believe in left-wing dogmatism. You can't run a government with bankers pounding at the door, nor be continually borrowing from your children and grandchildren, and calling that either "common sense" or the "people's agenda."

I believe in government that's prepared to meet new challenges by embracing new ideas and responding with new solutions, solutions that respond to real people and their real everyday concerns, a government like the government that Dalton McGuinty and members on this side



of the House are attempting, in spite of the difficulties, to present: responsible government, accountable government—

**Mr Colle:** Transparent government.

**Mr McMeekin:** —transparent government. It's time to move forward, to put an end to the politics of division and respond to the challenges ahead. Some of these challenges are pretty obvious: excellence for all in public education; the health care we need; an economy that achieves our potential; an ability to grow strong, healthy, caring, vibrant, compassionate communities; and finally, government that works.

It's time for government programs that work, that deliver on their objectives and that deliver real value to the people of Ontario; for government that's truly accountable.

**Mr Colle:** And clean water. That's the other thing we're getting on with.

**Mr McMeekin:** A province where you can have a glass of water with your hamburger. It's time to make the kinds of changes the people of Ontario want to see—a government that's prepared to set out and accomplish great things. It's time, in fact well beyond time, for a government prepared to invest its time and energy.

**Mr Colle:** Your time is up.

**Mr McMeekin:** Since my time is up, I just want to say that we're going to move forward on this. We're going to provide reform that celebrates that giftedness of Ontarians and invites them to the table to be about the process of building the strong, healthy communities we all want to see.

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** Tonight, we want to speak to this supply bill. I can't even find it here. Anyway, what this bill is—I had a little chance to look at it earlier, and we do need to ensure that the government has the needed funds to continue to operate. But this bill is nothing more than a manifestation of this government's failure to live up to its campaign promises. During the campaign, the then leader of the opposition, now Premier of the province of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, said, "I will not raise your taxes." Now, he didn't say, "I will not raise your taxes if, when I get elected, I like the way things look and it looks like I don't really have to work too hard not to raise your taxes, or I don't have to roll up my sleeves not to raise your taxes, or I don't have to do a lot of thinking or calculating." No, he didn't have all of these conditions attached to it. He said, "I will not raise your taxes."

So what did we get from Dalton McGuinty? The biggest tax hike on the people of Ontario in the history of this province. "I will not raise your taxes." Promise broken, number one. I can't tell you the exact order, but I'm just going by my order here tonight.

Then Dalton McGuinty says, "We will balance the budget." He didn't say, "We will balance the budget if, when we get there, the revenues look good and the expenses don't look too bad and it looks like, based on even very, very conservative projections, the numbers are going to be good at the end of the fiscal year." No, he

said, "We will balance the budget." He said, "We will not run a deficit." He didn't give you the time of saying, "We'll balance the budget in 2006." He said, "We will not run a deficit." So that includes 2003-04.

Now we have the Minister of Finance telling us, "Oh boy, this Erik Peters, he gave us these numbers we didn't expect. We had no knowledge of this. It was totally shocking." Even though the then finance critic, Gerry Phillips, last year said, "We run the risk of a \$5.5 billion deficit," the finance minister, after his Premier had campaigned on the promise, "We will not run a deficit," now is saying, "There's nothing we can do. The Tories did it."

Do you know Flip Wilson? Flip Wilson used to say, "The devil made me do it." Well, Mr Sorbara says, "The Tories made me do it." So there's promise number two.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'd like to ask the member to take a seat for a minute. Sorry to interrupt. I would ask the House to come to order so I can hear the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

**Mr Yakabuski:** It's hard to be heard in here, isn't it, Mr Speaker?

Then the Premier also campaigns on this ironclad guarantee: "Because I cared about those single mothers who are struggling with their hydro rates last year when those Tories had them so high, I will maintain the rate cap on hydroelectricity prices in this province at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour till 2006."

Then just not so long ago the Minister of Energy tabled—and I believe we've already passed that bill. We voted against it, didn't we?

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** We voted against it.

**Mr Yakabuski:** Oh, thank goodness for that. So now we have this government—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Yakabuski:** Premier McGuinty, then leader of the opposition, did not say, "I will maintain the hydro cap, but only if all the stars are lined up for me and everything is favourable." He did not leave any conditions with that. He said, "I will maintain that hydro cap at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour through 2006." Now the people of this province, unless you live in a hovel, where you can keep your electricity use below—

**Mr Dunlop:** Saddam Hussein.

**Mr Yakabuski:** Yes, if you're in the spider hole and you keep the hot water heater off, you'll be all right. But for most people, it's going to amount to a 25% increase or more in their hydro bill. I can only imagine the pain being felt by farmers across this province, by single parents across this province, by small businesses across this province because of that policy, which has simply been done because they're running on this bogus deficit figure that they've invented. That was promise broken number three.

**2020**

Not too far from my riding in the beautiful city of Ottawa—and I see the member for Ottawa West-Nepean

here. I lived there for a few years, but I've gone back to God's country in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. The past government was going to build a new hospital in Ottawa, the Royal Ottawa Hospital, which was so badly needed for mental health services that it also covers people who come from my riding. But the Premier says, "We're going to cancel that deal because we won't have privatization creeping into health care in this province. We will not have the private sector have anything to do with bricks and mortar. It's got to be publicly owned."

We had a deal—a good deal: For \$110 million, you were going to see a new hospital in Ottawa providing mental health services to the people—

**Hon Mr Watson:** On a point of order: I'm wondering if the honourable member could show us a copy of that great deal because the public in Ottawa is still waiting for the previous government to show us the good deal.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order. I apologize to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

**Mr Yakabuski:** To the best of my knowledge, the copy of that deal is in the same lockbox as the new Oak Ridges moraine deal, and they're going to be shown at the same time.

But anyway, for \$110 million we were going to have a new hospital in Ottawa. But the Premier says, "We can't do that. We're going to can that whole thing." So what does he do? They work a new little deal. They're not going to have a lease-to-own agreement, which would have seen that hospital publicly owned after 25 years anyway. No. Now they're going to have a mortgage. That's the only change. But the services that were going to be provided by the private sector will still be provided by the private sector. You know what that is? That is a validation of the deal that we had. They had to tinker with it a little bit, they had to just switch a couple of things here and move a couple of things there, but in the end, it's the same thing. So what do we have? I believe I'm up to broken promise number four.

Now we'll get back to that deal the member for Ottawa West-Nepean wanted to know about, because it was locked in that same place with the Oak Ridges moraine deal that we've been asking about. But let's talk about the Oak Ridges moraine. If I recall correctly, and I hope we're not being quoted on this because we might just be paraphrasing: "There won't be one single home built on the Oak Ridges moraine under my watch."

**Mr Dunlop:** Who said that?

**Mr Yakabuski:** Dalton McGuinty.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Yakabuski:** Yes, he did.

**Mr Miller:** So how many homes are they building?

**Mr Yakabuski:** Well, if I have the deed to one home in this hand and the deed to 5,700 homes in this hand, is that the same thing?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Yakabuski:** Well, I tell you, when I was in business—that's promise broken number five. You've got a full house there, boys. When I was in business, one

of the things that you had to be dependent on if you wanted to stay in business, because those customers had to come back, was that when you gave your word, it was like gold. It didn't matter if Yakabuski's Hardware lost money on the deal; sometimes their word was more important.

This finance minister says he's not going to balance the budget by taking a slash-and-burn approach to the finances of the province of Ontario. Well, I'm going to tell you that the people of Ontario are going to see that this government will crash and burn by the time of the next election.

**Mr Marchese:** I enjoyed the presentation by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Not only did I enjoy his remarks, but I enjoyed the orchestra around him supporting his remarks as he did so. I'm solito here tonight—alone, as they say in Spanish. But that's OK. If people want to join in, please do that. The choral group would be fine here, if you want to join.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** Yeah, Rosario. Go, Rosario, go. Go, Rosario, go.

**Mr Marchese:** That's it. Something like that, every now and then.

I just want to say to the citizens watching, it's 8:29; we are on live. Please don't tune off. We still have about another hour or so. I've got 22 minutes, God bless. I know the member for Nipissing probably is unhappy with the fact that he only had, what, a mere 10 or 12 minutes? Certainly not enough to highlight all of the broken promises of the Liberal Party, and I regret that for him, because I'm sure he was going to give us the other list that I'm going to mention to help you out.

But I do want to say to the citizens that ever since we reached an agreement with the Liberal Party, I have mel-lowed somewhat. I've got to tell you, it's hard. You see, when you lose the edge, it gets complicated. You can't get too soft around here, right? So part of having the so-called rump here, it gets—because if you befriend them, then you can't attack them as aggressively as you would like. It's a serious problem.

So we finally reached an agreement. It wasn't peaceful; it was a tough road. People of course blame everyone else.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Let me get to that. You've got to get into it.

It's hard to blame anyone, really, but it has been very difficult in terms of negotiating a fair agreement, which is something we were looking for for quite a long time, and finally we got it.

**Mr McMeekin:** Is this fair?

**Mr Marchese:** It's relatively fair. I can't dispute it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** David, it was good that we got it just before the session ended—mercifully, thank God. That was good. As I anticipated, I didn't think the Liberals were going to reach an agreement with us prior to the last day.



Oh, God bless, the Tories are here. Please. Nice to have you. Good to see you, Bill. John Baird, nice to see you. Feel free to join in, interrupt, whatever you want to say; it's OK with me.

**Mr Murdoch:** Who's up there? Who sits way up there?

2030

**Mr Marchese:** Bill says, "Who sits back there?" I can't see. I can't see, it's so far. That's why we argued that we should be next to you there instead of putting New Democrats all the way at the other extremity. It's not right. While you corrected some things—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** I'm trying to say, member from Rexdale—

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** Etobicoke North.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, that's right.

The agreement wasn't bad in terms of what one could squeeze out of the Liberal Party. You get what you can.

**Mr Murdoch:** It's like squeezing rotten oranges.

**Mr Marchese:** You get what you can.

**Mr Murdoch:** You get a little bit of juice, that's it.

**Mr Marchese:** And sometimes there isn't a whole lot of juice from that rock, so it's tough. So now I've got to be friendly with some of the Liberals beside me. I don't mind it from time to time.

Now let me get back to the supply and demand bill, because there's a lot here. There's a lot of demand out there in the public based on all the promises you made. But the supply is not there. There's no supply. And you know why? Because of the Tories, right? That's what the say, right? Now some people don't believe them. We leave that to the public and the electorate to decide. I mean, who are we, really? We make arguments here and we allow the citizens to listen to our debates and at the end of the day they decide. And they did.

Follow me with the camera. David Levac is here.

Back to the promises, because John was doing a brilliant—he was doing well.

**Mr Hudak:** He wasn't done yet.

**Mr Marchese:** I know; there was a whole long list. I don't know if he forgot the gas tax that was going to flow to the city. Remember that one?

**Mr Hudak:** Remind me.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm going to tell you. Prior to the election, during the election campaign, the cities were angry. They were so hurt by previous governments that they wanted a new deal. They did, because they felt they were undone, hurt by previous governments. The Liberals said, "We're going to fix that." New Democrats said they would too. Liberals said, "We are going to give away two cents out of the gasoline tax to help our struggling cities." Why? Because they recognized how important cities were, the fact that 70% to 80% of the people live in cities, and they needed governmental help. "We're going to give you two cents." The cities got nothing.

**Mr Murdoch:** Nothing? You mean they didn't get anything?

**Mr Marchese:** They got nothing. The other day Dalton said, "There ain't no money, the cupboard is bare. Sorry, cities—Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, Peterborough—but we got no money. I know we made a promise, it might have been foolish"—I don't think he says that—"but good Lord, once we found out how tough it was, you don't want us to be responsible, do you? You wouldn't want Liberals to be responsible, would you? No, cause once you're in power, you've got to act responsibly. By the way, we want transparency. We didn't want transparency prior to the election, but after the election, oh God, are we ever for transparency. So now we, the Liberals, are for transparency and responsible government because we couldn't"—you don't want to do what New Democrats did. No, you don't want to do that. You don't want to spend your way out of the recession, do you? No, what you need to do is to have a tough leader who can break promises and feel good about it. Break promises with pride, because it takes a strong leader to break a promise. Mike Harris wouldn't have been that strong. Ernie Eves wouldn't have been that strong. It takes a tough leader like Dalton McGuinty to break a promise, and he did. There is a long enumeration of promises—long. Let me pick them up as best as I can.

The cities are done. They're broke and on their own. The province says—every province does this, by the way; there's a pecking order—

**Mr Colle:** Rosario. Three weeks. Give us some time.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no, I agree with you. Some of the public wants to cut you some slack, and I agree with that. But let me enumerate around some of these things. You've got the pecking order here where everybody hates Toronto. Is that not true?

*Interjections:* No.

**Mr Marchese:** Generally, it's true. Then everyone in Canada hates Ontario. Is that not true?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** You agree with that. There is that pecking order where the city says, "We don't enough money," which is true. Then the province says, "We don't have enough money," which is true, because we're always trying to get a little more from somebody else. So the city is saying to the province, "Give us some money," the province is saying to the feds, "Give us some money," and in the meantime, the poor cities are struggling. They're not going to get their two cents. They're going to get two cents' worth, but not two cents of the gasoline tax. Solito, solito, solito.

**Mr Hudak:** What's that?

**Mr Marchese:** "On your own." Look, unilingualism can be cured. You guys have got to get on with other languages. Spanish is a universal language. Please, come on. Get on with that.

All right, moving on. One of the most amusing things, because I'll forget, is how the Tories say to the ministers, "You're not answering the questions."

**Mr Hudak:** They're not.

**Mr Marchese:** It's true. I remember for eight years saying to the Tories, "You're not answering the questions." I find it amusing how we do that. We get into questions and answers, and you're in opposition, you say to the ministers, "You're not answering my questions," then the Tories get in opposition and they say, "You're not answering my questions." It's tough, I'll tell you.

But I've got to tell you, Monte Kwinter's answers are usually dead on, did you notice? He answers questions.

**Interjection:** They're all good.

**Mr Marchese:** Well, not every Liberal—you can't say they're all good. No, that's partisan. Just leave it. Monte Kwinter answers questions. I've got to say to most of the other ministers, you've got to answer questions because that's what I would do. And part of what New Democrats did, and it might have been a mistake, is they answered questions. It might have been a mistake, but they answered questions.

Moving on to the broken promises—because I've got to tell you, that Taxpayer Protection Act is pretty serious stuff. I don't know how Dalton McGuinty did that and why he did it. I don't know. I think I understand the mind of Dalton McGuinty, in part, because it vacillates, as the Liberals do, on many fronts. I understand that. But I tell you, it was a serious mistake. What did Dalton say? "McGuinty and the Liberals promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act." They voted for it. They defended it during the campaign and now McGuinty claims that the act is a joke. He said it's a joke. The promise made was, "I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act and the Balanced Budget Act": Dalton McGuinty, taxpayer protection promise, September 11, 2003. The broken promise: "We're going to have to do something about the balanced budget legislation. It's having, at present in its existing form, a perverse effect on governments." It's true, I agree with you, but why couldn't he have said that prior to the election when it mattered? People believed that he could do this.

**Mr Colle:** Then we saw the books.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no, Mike. Don't give me that. People believed that McGuinty could do the following: increase services by \$7 billion; balance the budget by not increasing taxes. No tax increases, service increases, balance the budget and, to boot, we—you—understood that the previous government—because you're here—had a deficit problem, and you and I knew that the deficit was in the order—more or less, give or take—of anywhere from \$2 to \$4 billion that we were aware of. Without the benefit of Mr Erik Peters, you and I, McGuinty, the Premier now, then leader of the Liberal Party, knew that the previous government had a deficit.

2040

Then my friends say, "Yeah, but we didn't know. The Tories said they didn't have one, but we didn't know." Come on. You guys are experienced politicians; of course you knew. Monsieur Gerry Phillips, the now Minister of Management Board—

**Mr Hudak:** What did Gerry say?

**Mr Marchese:** Gerry gets angry. Have you noticed, every time you say to Gerry, "But Gerry, you said, and you predicted with great visionary kind of abilities, there was a \$5-billion risk"—so-called, because he hates, if you refer to that remark as having anything to do with a deficit. Because a risk is not a deficit. He gets genuinely angry. Because I could feel it. Because it's a deficit, right? Two billion dollars, \$3 billion, \$4 billion, "risk/deficit," however you want to call it—you knew, I knew.

All of sudden, you get into government, and as both Johns said, "We didn't know. We've got to be responsible. You don't want us to spend money, do you, and increase the deficit? No, no. You don't want tax increases. No, no." But during the election you had this little magic wand—or big; I don't know—saying, "Yeah, we can deliver on every promise you want, whatever it is you want. Oak Ridges moraine, Mike? No problemo. Gone. Highway 407 reduction of rates because it's really evil? Gone." Dalton could do that. "Auto insurance rates too high? We're going to reduce them. Gone. No problem." The energy cap: Before the election was good; after the election it was bad. Gone. Now you can't do it. You see, that little magic wand, it ain't so magic no more. October 2, and that little magic wand was just gone. It didn't work any more. It worked prior to the election, but after the election it's gone; no more power. Isn't that amazing how that works? It's like this magical transformation, this alchemy from one point to the other, and with the Liberal Party it happens all the time.

**Mr McMeekin:** Be fair.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm trying. I'm friendly as much as I can, but it gets hard.

On education—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, but let me get to education because it's one of my favourite subjects. My friend from—David, where's David? Oh, Ted—and Wayne too—but Ted, you were talking about education and how the former government was bad and conflicting and causing divisions between groups of people—all of that true, quite right. Then you said how many cuts boards had to sustain with respect to librarians, special education—remember that list? It's a big—

*Applause.*

**Mr Marchese:** —exactly—40,000 students waiting for special education services, the most needy of kids: gone. Social workers: gone. Youth workers in the Toronto board: gone. Educational assistants: gone. Caretakers in some of our schools went from full-load—there might have been eight and now there are four. Bad stuff; you're quite right. Ted speaks of it as if they would come into power and correct it.

**Mr Hudak:** The magic wand.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, prior to the election, that little magic wand was there, waving it left and right, around and every which way, right?

*Interjection.*



**Mr Marchese:** John, good to see you, buddy. Please, have a seat.

I've got to tell you that that little magic wand had a whole heap of power. Man, was it potent. Before the election, Ted, school closures: bad stuff. They get elected and they say, "Moratorium on school closures."

**Mr Hudak:** No, show me the money. Show me the money. No money.

**Mr Marchese:** No money. Show me the money, because that's what it's about, right?

**Mr Baird:** They'll make reservations, but they won't pay for dinner.

**Mr Marchese:** Camera: John is here.

Money was allotted for the school year. It has already been given away, there's no more money, right? They put a moratorium on school closures.

**Mr Baird:** They did.

**Mr Marchese:** They did. If you put a moratorium, it means that if there are pressures on school boards to keep the schools open without any money, what do you do?

**Mr Baird:** Nothing.

**Mr Marchese:** There's not much you can do. But they put a moratorium—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Mike, what's wrong? Mike, Mike, we're buddies, come on.

**Mr Colle:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just ask the member—we appreciate his comments, but we hope he would address the Speaker and not the Tory backbench, please?

**The Acting Speaker:** You're quite right. The member for Trinity-Spadina has to address his comments through the Chair, and he knows that.

**Mr Marchese:** Through you, absolutely. John, you understand this, right?

If you put a moratorium on school closures—I'm talking through you, Ted, please.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Come to order. Please take your seat.

I appreciate the festive and jovial mood of the House, but we have to observe the rules.

I recognize the member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr Marchese:** Thank you, Speaker.

**Mr Baird:** Don't talk to me, Rosario.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not going to talk to you, John, because if I talk to you, then the Speaker's going to rule against something.

I was talking about the fact that if you declare a moratorium on school closures, if you don't give money to school boards to keep a small school—because it's expensive, right? But we agree, Liberals and New Democrats—Tories probably too; I'm not sure.

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** They did close a lot of hospitals.

**Mr Marchese:** Yeah, they did.

But to keep a small school open, you need extra—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** Let me finish, if I can. Boys, please.

You need extra money for vice-principals or principals or librarians—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** I've been here all alone. I called all the others. Gilles, I'm sorry. I called everyone else. I said, "I'm alone," and so I got some extra help.

So on the point of a moratorium on school closures, that's an empty promise. It means nothing. I said to the minister today, "Show me the money or take back the empty promise," because it's got nothing in it, right?

Just the other day, a couple of weeks ago, the minister announced 112 million bucks to give to school boards. Tony Ruprecht has got real money. Show me the money, Tony. No, no money's coming. You've got to show me real money, Tony.

What does it say here?

**Mr Hudak:** Dalton dollars.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, Liberal Dalton dollars. Right on. That goes a long way.

So, Ted, Speaker, through you—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Here, show it to Tony Ruprecht.

Some 112 million bucks are given away to school boards to do two important things: deal with the issue of ESL that Dr Rozanski spoke to, and deal with literacy programs. Good stuff. The problem is that out of the \$112 million, Toronto gets \$46 million, and the minister says in the press scrum—because I was there—"The Toronto board can use it to pay down its deficit."

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** Kathleen from Don Valley, you and I both know that that money should be used for ESL.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** To Kathleen Wynne from Don Valley West, I say this: The minister should have dealt with the deficit apart from this money that was allocated for ESL and literacy programs. You shouldn't take valued dollars that go to valued programming to be used for the deficit instead of dealing with the deficit.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** Did the Liberals do that, really?

**Mr Marchese:** That's what Liberals do.

So Kennedy thought, "How do I give money to the Toronto board without calling it money for the Toronto board? Well, we're going to give away the money for ESL and literacy programs." Parents think they're getting money for literacy programs and ESL, but they're not going to get one cent.

So many broken promises. Where is the magic wand after October 2? It's gone.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rejoice in the additions we have in the New Democratic caucus. I notice we now have status, with a multitude of people, and I call for unanimous consent that the NDP be given party status on the basis of all the additions.

**The Acting Speaker:** It was not a point of order.

2050

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** This is a special night here in the Legislature, a wonderful night. This is the month of December. When I was studying as a young man in school, I heard about the migration of birds and I knew that birds migrated in the spring and I knew that birds migrated in the fall, but I didn't realize that Tories migrated in December, migrated from this side of the rump to the other side of the rump. So it is a special night. There must be Christmas in the air.

Tonight, when we're being serious, we're talking about the supply motion. I want to tell the good people at home: The supply motion is very serious, because without that the government cannot do its job. It can't pay its bills. We collect the money from you and we spend the money.

What I want to talk about is a theme that I have called "Let the Sun Shine In." Who remembers that song? It's amazing, while I'm here, that we go in front of the people and we're saying in this bill that we want the authorization from the people, from this House, from their representatives, to spend some \$27.7 billion in this fiscal year. Why do we do that? Because we live in a democracy. Isn't democracy a wonderful thing? That's what we're all doing here. We were elected by the people. Why are we here? Because we're offering a new direction for Ontario.

I'm looking at an article in the *Toronto Star*, May 14, 2003. I was discussing this matter with the legislative library, and I recalled an interesting statement that a previous government of this House had a secret \$36-billion spending plan which was approved by Ontario's Conservative cabinet. Liberal MPP Sean Conway revealed that cabinet spending order, believed to be the largest in Canadian history, during debate about whether the decision by Premier Ernie Eves to present the March 27 budget in an auto parts plant constituted contempt of the Legislature. I remember the Speaker, Mr Carr, said it was contempt of this House. Why was that?

**Mr Yakabuski:** Was he a Liberal?

**Mr Wilkinson:** No, he wasn't a Liberal. He was non-partisan, but in a previous life he was a Progressive Conservative—I think more progressive than conservative.

"Most disturbing, he added, was that the order in council was not filed in the cabinet office, leaving it effectively hidden from public scrutiny." It's time to let the sun shine in.

"Orders in council," if they had been provided, "are often reviewed by journalists and political staff."

"This is a whole story about avoiding scrutiny, avoiding oversight and avoiding accountability," said Conway of the spending plan.

"He said there's a clear difference between short-term spending money for a government and the size of the Eves plan, which he labelled a slush fund."

"This is the largest appropriation made by special cabinet order in the history of Ontario, the history of

Canada, as far as I can tell, in the history of the Commonwealth."

The previous government was in here, decided to have a budget, not in this House, but at an auto parts factory, and among themselves, as they walked around, the former Minister of Finance, Janet Ecker, and the former head of the cabinet, Mr Runciman, decided to sign a Lieutenant Governor's warrant, an order in council, without telling us, without telling this House, without telling the people; they didn't file it with the cabinet office—and these previous government members come into this House and give us grief about the fact that we're in this House doing our job, going in front of the people and saying, "We need \$27 billion to pay the bills of this province between here and the end of March."

I find awfully interesting, when we looked into the issue of using special warrants—what was the history of special warrants? What legislation permits special warrants to be used in this fashion? It's an interesting fact: Before 1991, special warrants could only be used when the House was prorogued, when the money was urgently required for the public good and when the expenditures fell outside of existing votes and items in the estimates. In 1991 the NDP government passed an amendment removing the urgency requirement. Do you see a trend here?

**Mr Baird:** You're frightening the little children.

**Mr Wilkinson:** I know I am.

Do you see a trend? I see a trend where government decided that they don't have to be accountable. That's why this government—that's why we're so proud that we would go into this House—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wilkinson:** The NDP. We know the NDP. They decided there didn't have to be a sense of urgency to just secretly authorize billions and billions of dollars. Oh, no. Then we get another government that came in here. Is it any wonder that there are new members in this House? The people have decided it's time to sweep out and put in some people who believe in accountability. I am a small businessman. I believe in accountability. You have to be in business. What we find here is we have just a history of spending more and more money without the public—the public watching tonight—being able to scrutinize what we're doing. What things happen when we don't have the scrutiny of day? We're going to let the sunshine in.

Let's look at OPG. Let's look at "Ontario Patronage Generation." What do they do? When we took the old Hydro and created the successor companies—Hydro One, my God. I was on the radio today on the New NX—people upset with Hydro One and some of the things that they're doing to good consumers without notice. We need to let the sunshine in there.

Then we look at Ontario Power Generation, though some people call it "Ontario Patronage Generation," but we put an end to that. There were some patronage appointments that were fired, and for good cause. We found just today that instead of getting \$250 million in,



we're on the hook for another \$600 million on the way out; \$850 million, nearly a billion dollars that we were counting on—to do what? To pay for schools, to pay for hospitals, to protect our environment. That's why we have to do something about it.

**Mr Dunlop:** You don't need to act like the opposition; you're the government.

**Mr Wilkinson:** You're right: We're the government. We've been here for two months, and we've looked under every rock. The things we find under those rocks are not very pleasant.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wilkinson:** You're right: They're scary. That would scare little children.

It's important that this government start its mandate by revising the Audit Act, by saying to people that we have to get value for money. Some 80% of what this government spends we send to our funding partners, and the only audit that we have is a quantitative audit. The auditors come in after the fact and say, "You gave so much money to the hospital, to the school boards, to the university, to the college, to the municipality. You gave them the money, and they spent it. There's nothing missing. Nobody stole anything."

What we don't get is a qualitative audit, a value-for-money audit, the type of audit that we had at Pickering. What did we find at Pickering? We find we spend \$4 billion and we have no electricity. I don't think that's a very good value proposition. I don't think you can spend \$4 billion, get nothing and think that's a good idea. Why didn't we know about that?

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** Bad management.

**Mr Wilkinson:** Yes, bad management. Why didn't we know about that? Because previous governments didn't let the sunshine in. Oh, no, no. The successor companies to Hydro were excluded from freedom of information. They were allowed to deal in their business in secret. Why? Because they were going to be privatized, and private business doesn't have to reveal everything.

But, you know, in private business, when you make a mistake as big as billions and billions of dollars, somebody gets fired. My God, in cases like Enron, people go to jail. It shocked me that I could come to this House, find this mismanagement of the people's money and no one is going to jail. I can tell you, on Bay Street, some would be there already. They'd be lining up. The lawyers and prosecutors would be getting all set for this. We come in, and when we shine the lights into the dark, little crevices of the government of the day that we take over, what do we find? It's interesting, because we have the previous government castigating us in public by saying, "You made promises. You made promises." Do you know why? We made promises based on the fact that we thought that the honourable members of the government—

**Mr Dunlop:** You thought—

**Mr Wilkinson:** That's right, we thought, and we don't know that any more, I say to the member from Simcoe

North. Now we know a fact: The people of this province were hoodwinked, I think, because there can't be such a huge difference.

So I'm glad to support the supply motion tonight, that there's money being spent in this province. It's being authorized in this House where the light of day is apparent. The sun will shine down; no more dark crevices.

**2100**

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** It seems to me the essence of this debate has drifted off course. This motion asks us to support the expenditure of money in order that our government may continue to function. It asks, in part, that we continue to pay the men and women who provide Ontario's public services every day, often serving as unsung heroes to Ontarians. I say, let's not only pay them; let's also thank them.

I think the first significant part of this motion is that it has been introduced in this Legislature, where it can be subjected to open debate by all members. This is not an auto parts motion. And next year, Ontarians can look forward to a provincial budget delivered in the Ontario Legislature before Ontarians.

It's raucous in here; it's messy. Some people who watch us on TV and attend in the public galleries wish that we were more polite to one another. But, in the end, the product is pure democracy, and it's a beautiful product. That's why we ask support in this House for a supply motion presented in this House.

We're \$21 billion deeper in debt than we were eight years ago. The deficit that Ontario faces is a chronic one. Selling the assets that belong to all Ontarians to paper over a deficit that deepens each year is nothing more than a band-aid solution. For a homeowner, that's like selling the sofa at distressed prices just to pay your overdraft, when each and every month you're still spending recklessly and not earning enough money. Next month, you might sell the shelves and the chairs; the month after that, the dining room furniture. This spiral would run out for a family when you run out of assets to sell. In Ontario, this attitude by its government ran out on October 2, when Ontarians voted themselves a new government.

Each week, the urban myth that Ontario Tories can manage money is exploded in new ways. More than \$4.3 billion was spent, with no strategic plan, in the Ministry for Economic Development and Trade. More than \$1 billion was spent from the Ontario Innovation Trust without ministry or legislative oversight, without cabinet or any other approval. During the past eight years, the previous government spent a quarter of a billion dollars of taxpayers' money on partisan government advertising. Ontarians need no longer wince and clutch their wallets while they look at glossy and expensive ads and brochures that say nothing of substance, but merely paraphrase the platform of the ruling party, with perhaps the name and photo of the Premier or a member of the executive council prominently displayed on them.

This motion is about responsible use of the tax revenues sent to their government by Ontario families and



businesses. This is a motion that tells Ontario's schools that the money they need to serve students who need help learning English will be there. This is a motion that tells our hospitals that the money they need to pay doctors, nurses and technologists will be there. This is a motion for all Ontarians who reached down deep, who found hope and promise in their future and chose change. This is a motion that tells those Ontarians that their future is underway. This supply motion is one of the ways that we're changing the way Ontarians govern themselves. This is a motion that provides peace on earth and goodwill to all Ontarians.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** I have to say, that was a wonderful quote. I'm very proud of our member who spoke on this particular issue. We only have a few minutes and we have had some wonderful conversation, if not debate, on the issue. Other than the theatrics out there, there are other people who are very seriously interested in what we are doing in the House. They are called taxpayers. This is a very important piece of legislation which normally does not attract so much debate. It's something that has to be done, and it will be done. The only problem is that we are trying to delay what's going to happen, and it's coming.

We took office barely some 50 days or so ago and we are moving very quickly in doing what we said we would do. Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has brought into this House already a number legislative pieces. We have seen some today which are very apropos of what we are talking about here tonight.

We hear so much about breaking promises, or the Taxpayer Protection Act. There isn't one member in this House who doesn't say, "If you do one thing, you cannot do the other." It is so true. Our leader, our Premier, says, "We have to be honest. We have to tell the people of Ontario the truth. We have to be very transparent." This is exactly what we are doing here today. We are telling the people of Ontario what we have to do because the previous government tried to balance the budget and they couldn't. They tried to cut 30% for the corporations. They couldn't. They tried to sell some assets in order to balance the budget and they couldn't do it. Even as late as October 2, 2002, the former Minister of Finance, Janet Ecker—when they saw that they couldn't do it, they broke the Taxpayer Protection Act and they abolished the 1.9% tax relief.

So what are we doing today? We are giving the people of Ontario what they expect. It is exactly what we promised during the election. If we want to give the quality of service that the people of Ontario expect from their government, we have to take the action that the government is doing today. The people understand. The people in my area do understand that if we want to provide good-quality health care, good long-term care, good education and properly fund our transportation services, which are so important for our economy, something has to give. We are moving in that direction.

The announcement that our Minister of Finance made today addresses exactly that, and rightly so. This is the

right time. I don't know if I'll get another chance to speak in this House before we adjourn for the holidays, but I would love to—

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** This is it, Mario.

**Mr Sergio:** This is it, because my friend the Minister for Municipal Affairs, the member for Kingston and the Islands, wants to have a couple of words on this issue as well, and rightly so. So I want to use the opportunity to convey a message to the people in York West, and through them to the rest of the people of Ontario. There is a positive message coming from this government. There is a direction that is full of hope from this particular government. Whatever the government is doing under the leadership of our Premier, Mr McGuinty, we are doing it with the people of Ontario in mind.

Having said that, I want to wish the members of the House, the people of York West and the people of Ontario the best for the holidays. If they drink, don't drive. The very best for 2004. With that, I'll leave the floor for the five minutes that the member for Kingston and the Islands has requested.

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**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** I'm delighted to speak to this particular motion, because I'm sure everyone in this House agrees that the people who work for the province of Ontario, who work for each and every one of us in the various ministries, need to be paid. That's what supply is all about. We want to make sure that there are sufficient funds so that when the House doesn't sit over the next three months or so, there is enough money allocated to the various ministries and the Chair of Management Board will be very happy that all of the hard-working people who are the civil servants of this province are paid. Surely even the opposition would agree with that. I see them nodding their heads, so I can only assume that they will vote for this as well and it will be a unanimous vote.

I just wanted to address one other issue that we've heard so much about over the last couple of months or month and a half that we've been here, and that deals with the whole deficit situation. The argument goes something like this: Mr Phillips discovered back in June that according to his figures—and he's a renowned financial expert—the province was going to be out \$5 billion if we kept going along the same line of spending and revenue coming in etc. What the opposition has never stated is that last June they violently disagreed with that. I can still remember the various ministers of the government saying that Mr Phillips was totally wrong, that the budget was balanced and what have you. That's one scenario, and I just want you to put that aside for a moment.

Our member said, "It looks like there's going to be a \$5-billion deficit," and the government of the day at that time said, "There isn't going to be one." Since then, we've had a couple of affirmations, after we took over government, that in fact there is a \$5.6-billion deficit looming as far as the former auditor, Mr Erik Peters, is



concerned. He is now an independent consultant and he took an independent look at the books—

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** What did you pay him?

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Obviously we paid the man. Why wouldn't we pay the man? He did a job. He did a job for you and me and the taxpayers of Ontario. He found out that what Gerry Phillips had been saying all along, since June of this year, in fact was correct, that there was a \$5.6-billion deficit.

The opposition would have you believe that we can somehow make that difference up between now and the end of March. That is just absolute nonsense. How can you, in a budget where there's a \$5.6-billion deficit that has now been identified by the finance minister and by Erik Peters independently, make that money up in a matter of three months? You would have to cut out just about every service that the government offers or pays for. You would have to pretty much close the hospitals, close the schools and take some extreme, drastic steps, and those members know, just as well as you and I, Speaker, that it is simply impossible. If we want to make sure that the people of Ontario, particularly those individuals who are down and out, who really need the services of government—if those services are not available to them, either through social assistance or health care, much needed particularly by the poorer elements in our society, they darned well know that those people would be absolutely devastated if we were not somehow able to provide for them.

I say to you it is obviously our hope and our aim to balance this budget. But I am sure that the people of Ontario will understand, taking into account the horrible financial deficit that this party across the aisle from us has left us, that it may not be possible. But we will work on it, to make sure that the people of Ontario get the best possible government and get the highest quality of life possible in this province.

**Mr Dunlop:** It's my pleasure to represent our party in this debate tonight on the supply motion. I should let you know right up front, Mr Speaker, and the members of the government, that we will be voting against the supply motion tonight.

To the citizens of Ontario—and I hope you're watching tonight—this represents \$27 billion, and quite frankly we simply don't trust the spending habits of this new government.

To the citizens of the province, we've watched very carefully over the last three months. We've seen no attempt to decrease the so-called deficit—the artificial deficit that we see. What makes it—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Dunlop:** There's the member from Elgin-Middlesex, the man chirping over there, the Minister of Agriculture, who has let down all the farmers in the province. I'm glad to see him babbling away, because he should be ashamed of himself for what he's done so far this year.

The fact of the matter is that we've seen a so-called economic statement today—one that wasn't locked up of course, everybody in the province had a look at it before they released it—and it calls for a 10% increase in funding in the province, which is completely unacceptable.

We will not trust this government to actually spend that money wisely. We expect a bunch of ridiculous announcements over the course of the winter which would waste taxpayers' money in Ontario. A 10% increase in spending is completely unacceptable, and we heard that tonight.

When I got up here tonight, I wasn't planning on being bitter, but when I heard the comments from some of the members here, I realized why I should be. These people are not acting like the government; they're continuing to act like the opposition. Why are they acting like the opposition? Roll up your sleeves and get to work, ladies and gentlemen. That's your job here.

**Hon Mr Peters:** Mine are rolled up and ready to work.

**Mr Dunlop:** You've done a great job of getting to work, Minister of Agriculture. You've already let all the agricultural stakeholders in the province down. They're real happy with you today. You've done a great job, Minister, and Dalton McGuinty—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm going to call the Minister of Agriculture and Food to order.

You have the floor, member for Simcoe North.

**Mr Dunlop:** I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for being one of the few rural-type cabinet ministers on the urban Dalton McGuinty government. It's 50% Toronto; 21 out of 23 cabinet ministers from cities of the province. That sends a strong message to northern and rural Ontario.

In closing off tonight, I'm going to calm down now and talk more politely and more quietly. We, the 103 people who represent the citizens of Ontario, should be—for a citizen of Ontario to be entrusted with this position is simply phenomenal, and I think everyone here knows that. I've heard all the new members from the Liberal caucus and my new friend John Yakabuski, and Laurie Scott from our Tory caucus, and all the NDP members who are here. We have a tremendous responsibility. With that responsibility, we have to spend accordingly.

I give the Liberals credit. I give Mr Sorbara credit. You won the election fair and square. Our job as the opposition, of course, is to watch you very closely. To Mr Sorbara and to Mr McGuinty, we think you're already off to a bad start. However, that's your direction, and time will tell. But the fact of the matter is, it is a tremendous responsibility that you have. You're going to spend \$75 billion next year to make this province work. We hope that you're not going to drive jobs out of the province and that you'll create a strong economy—like the million new jobs that you've seen created over the last eight years; like the \$10 billion that you've seen the government, when we were in power, spend on health care; like the \$4 billion that we spent on education

increases. Ladies and gentlemen, that's what we did. As a result of Ernie Eves and Mike Harris, one million more people are working. That's the legacy you have to follow.

I want to say this to the citizens of Ontario and to you folks here tonight, through the Speaker: I want to congratulate everyone who is here. We're not going to have a lot of time to speak tomorrow, because tomorrow is the last day of this session. I think the government has had a good first session. I think the opposition has had a good first session of this Parliament. I think we've all done a good job representing the province of Ontario.

With that, I hope everyone in this House has a safe, healthy and happy Christmas season. On behalf of our caucus, I want to wish everyone here and all the citizens in the province all the best in 2004. I hope we have great year. All the best to Ontario, and may we last forever.

**The Acting Speaker:** Mr Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 28, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 2121 to 2122.*

**The Acting Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

#### Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Phillips, Gerry
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marchese, Rosario	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Sandals, Liz
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sorbara, Greg
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

#### Nays

Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Runciman, Robert W.
Hudak, Tim	Miller, Norm	Yakubski, John

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 45; the nays are 6.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 63, this bill is immediately ordered for third reading.

### SUPPLY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2003

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr Sorbara, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004 /  
Projet de loi 28, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2004.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

Same vote? Same vote.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 45; the nays are 6.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The House is now adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 am.

*The House adjourned at 2130.*



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**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	<b>Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie</b> (L) Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
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Springdale		Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
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Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga		Kingston et les îles	
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London North Centre /	Matthews, Deborah (L)
		London Centre-Nord	
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London West / -Ouest	<b>Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher</b> (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
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Grey		Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
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		Mississauga South / -Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Essex	<b>Crozier, Bruce</b> (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
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Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
		Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	<b>Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L)</b> Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thornhill Thunder Bay-Atikokan Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord Timiskaming-Cochrane	<b>Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L)</b> Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines Racco, Mario G. (L) Mauro, Bill (L) Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
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St Paul's	<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L)</b> Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.



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of Ontario

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario

Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 18 December 2003

Jeudi 18 décembre 2003

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers





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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 December 2003

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 décembre 2003

*The House met at 1000.  
Prayers.*

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

#### DECORUM IN CHAMBER

**Ms Monique Smith (Nipissing):** I move the resolution that, in the opinion of this House, members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should restore decorum and respect in the Legislature by wearing proper attire during routine proceedings in the legislative chamber, such that male members wear a jacket, shirt and tie as standard dress and female members wear equivalent contemporary business attire.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Ms Smith has moved private member's resolution number 6. According to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes.

**Ms Smith:** I rise today to speak to this resolution. While some people have seen it to be a trivial resolution, and some others have seen it to be a fashion statement and have chosen to make their own fashion statement today, I believe that this resolution goes to the very essence of decorum and respect for this Legislature and our institutions.

Since being elected, many members in my riding have started watching the proceedings of this place and have noted the lack of decorum and respect in this chamber. They have asked me about dress codes—why don't we have rules, why is that people are allowed to behave the way they are? They've asked me where the respect for our Legislature has gone. Every day our constituents are watching us on TV and we have school children and others visiting this chamber. We expect a certain level of decorum and respect in our classrooms from our students, and I believe that we should be showing that same kind of respect for this institution.

As we attend to business in our ridings, we are expected to attend in appropriate attire to formal functions, to civic functions, to funerals, to weddings. We attend in appropriate attire. In this Legislature, we represent our riding. In our riding, we represent the Legislature. I believe that this Legislature deserves respect and deserves a level of civility and decorum. We have years of history here, years of tradition to uphold.

I first came to this Legislature when I was seven years old. I came to see the speech from the throne with my

father, who was then the member for Nipissing. I remember being dumbfounded at the level of pomp and circumstance. When I was 12, I returned as a page. At that time it was a much more collegial and civil place, and there was a greater level of decorum and civility in this chamber.

There were, of course, exceptions and some fun notes. There was the member from Muskoka, who occasionally wore his plaid blazer and cheered the place up. There was the member for Grey-Bruce, who wore his white shoes and his white belt at the appropriate, and sometimes inappropriate, time of year. But they still maintained a level of respect for this institution and this chamber.

I returned again in 1985, when I worked for the Minister of Education, and in 1997, when worked for the leader of the official opposition. During those years I saw a decline in the level of respect in this chamber, and it saddened me. It disappoints me and it disappoints a number of members of my constituency to see the lack of respect in this Legislature.

In preparing for the discussion today I looked at dress codes and requirements in other Legislatures in order to inform the members of this Legislature what is happening across the country and where we stand.

#### *Interjection.*

**Ms Smith:** I do believe you need to be informed, Mr Bisson.

At the House of Commons there is no standing order setting out a dress code for members participating in debate, but the Speaker has ruled that in order to be recognized to speak in debate, on points of order or during question period, tradition and practice require all members—male or female—to dress in contemporary business attire. This dress code is observed. This may be a practice that we wish to adopt here in this Legislature, that in order for a member to be recognized, they should be properly attired.

In the Senate there is no specific dress code, but they rely on *Beauchesne*, a parliamentary document, which provides that a jacket and tie are required to be worn by male members.

In Alberta, there is no formal dress code; however, prior to the beginning of the spring session, the Speaker sends an annual letter to members addressing a variety of issues. It includes the statement that suitable dress is always the order of the day and traditional practices will be continued.

In British Columbia, male members are required to wear a jacket and tie. In Manitoba, male MLAs are



required to wear a jacket and tie and female MLAs are to wear corresponding business attire. In New Brunswick there is no official dress code, but they too rely on Beauchesne. In Newfoundland, men are required to wear a shirt, jacket, tie and trousers, and women are required to wear business attire. In Nova Scotia there is no formal dress code, but a standard is followed. And in Nunavut, the rules of the Legislative Assembly require that when in the assembly, every member shall be attired in a traditional dress or in a manner appropriate to the dignity of the assembly.

That, I would argue—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Smith:** Member for Niagara Centre, perhaps you'd like to move over into the camera. Oh, he didn't get the boots.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The member for Nipissing.

**Ms Smith:** I do hope that the cameras have been able to capture the member for Niagara Centre, who we fully expected would turn up in such attire today, of all days. It is a historic moment and I hope it will be captured in Hansard.

I just think that the member's attire today reflects again the fact that he has very little respect for the traditions of this Legislature.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

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**Ms Smith:** For the record, we should note that the member for Niagara Centre has appeared in a tuxedo today in the Legislature, but still sporting his cowboy boots.

In Prince Edward Island, business attire has been interpreted to mean, for male members, a jacket and tie, and for female members, generally accepted business attire. In Yukon, there is no formal dress code, but a standard is followed: When the Speaker is in the chair, the accepted dress code requires that all male MLAs wear a jacket and tie and female MLAs should wear comparable attire.

Those are the standards across the country. Those same standards are not respected in this Legislature. But as my colleagues to my left are prone to quote from various parliamentary procedural documents, I would also like to look at Marleau and Montpetit where they refer to proper attire: "Speakers have ruled that to be recognized to speak in debate, on points of order or during question period, tradition and practice require all members, male or female, to dress in contemporary business attire." In Beauchesne, Rules and Forms of the House of Commons of Canada, there is a discussion of decorum in the House: "Many Speakers have ruled that male members must wear a jacket, shirt and tie, and on rare occasions, such as Robbie Burns Day, have been permitted to wear a kilt. In general, Speakers have enforced conservative, contemporary standards."

Beauchesne also follows with a discussion on appearances in the chamber and states: "The concern of the Speaker for the appearance of the chamber during debate extends further than the dress of the members. While members are entitled to refresh themselves with glasses of water during debate, the consumption of any food in the House is strictly prohibited."

Why is it, then, Mr Speaker, that we stick to those rules—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. We do have a speaker on the floor. I know this issue is generating some levity, but let's give the person on the floor our attention.

**Ms Smith:** While we do recognize that there are rules that everyone respects in this House, such as not eating in the House, such as bowing to the Speaker when we pass, there are other rules that have just been left aside. I find it quite disappointing that the members in the third party, the independent members of the NDP, would choose not to respect this Legislature and the traditions of this Legislature. I think it's important that we renew—

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On a point of order, Speaker: I thought it was proper procedure to refer to members by their ridings and their ridings only. I thought that was proper respect for the rules of the Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is proper respect. It's not always followed by almost everybody in here, so I would prefer that you do just that.

**Ms Smith:** I apologize, Mr Speaker. As always, I would like to uphold the rules.

**Mr Hampton:** On a point of order, Speaker: Are you saying there is a new rule?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm not saying anything of the kind. I said that you should refer to members by their position and/or their riding. I would prefer that you do that. I'm just saying that not everybody—almost everybody at some time or other doesn't abide by that rule. I wish they would.

**Ms Smith:** Finally, I would just like to note that in Ontario, our library has found for me that there is no official dress code but a general practice. They do, however, list a number of exceptions, most of which we see daily here in this House. I would just like the members of this House to take a moment and reflect on the history of the Legislature, on the fact that we do have traditions to uphold. I think it's important that we do uphold those traditions, the values of this Legislature and the respect that we have for our institutions. I would encourage everyone to support this motion.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** At the outset, the New Democratic Party wants to thank the author of this resolution. As you know, until we just recently acquired the most modest levels of funding, we've had but volunteers, no staff. Our one communications volunteer, our media person, Jeff Ferrier, has been double-, triple-, quadruple-booked and really has felt quite bad about the inability, on his part, to get us the publicity, the coverage in the media that we deserve. The author of this

resolution has made up for that modest shortcoming, and all of us thank her for her contribution to the coverage that New Democrats have received over the course of last week and indeed this week. Again, I apologize, because I may not have been here as often as I should have been, but I've been busy doing interviews—television, radio and print—around this issue.

I want to tell you, New Democrats are advocates of dress codes. We believe in standards. We believe in standards with respect to questions during question period and have decried the low standards that have been met by the government backbenchers. We believe in tradition and convention when it comes to where opposition caucuses are seated on the opposition side of the House. I won't belabour you with that lengthy point of order that was made a couple of weeks ago. We believe that this Parliament is an important place. We believe that we should sit, which is why we opposed this government's resolution that gave it a three-month vacation beginning tomorrow, through the months of January, February and March.

Yes, I very much believe in dress codes. I believe that people should wear Canadian-made clothing. I believe that people should wear unionized clothing, union clothing with union labels, so that you know that the workers, the women and men who sew those garments, are paid fairly and decently and treated fairly and decently in their workplaces. I tell you that I'm proud, as a member of this Legislature and just as a member of this provincial community, to have made every effort to ensure that, yes, the clothes I wear are Canadian-made, that they're union-made; that, yes, those drab white and blue button-down shirts are made by workers who get treated fairly and decently; and that, yes, the Boulet cowboy boots, Canadian-made, that I buy from Elio's down in Thorold—and I recommend Elio's boots to anybody here. It's worth the drive to Thorold. Go down to Elio's in downtown Thorold, who has the best supply and biggest stock of cowboy boots you've ever seen, Canadian-made cowboy boots, cowboy boots that are made by your neighbour, not imports—Elio's in Thorold.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** Have they got cowgirl boots?

**Mr Kormos:** They've got boots for cow-women as well. Ms Churley-NDP, would be well advised—look, in this new era of political correctness, I'm supposed to say “cowgirl”? Not on your life. Yes, cow-women can avail themselves of boots at Elio's as well.

I'm proud of the folks at Lee Wah Laundry in Welland, down on Helles Avenue. The Lees were immigrants to this country many, many years ago, but have worked hard, raised their own family, sent a son, with a lot of hard work, through university and on to a professional career. Why, Mr and Mrs Lee, yes, continue to launder and press my white shirts and my rather drab blue oxford cotton shirts—Lee Wah Laundry on Helles Avenue in Welland. I'm proud of them. They're the sort of people who I say set standards that I want to aspire to. I'm proud of the folks down at Blake's Men's Wear at

the Seaway Mall in Welland, where I've been shopping for, heck, I guess 40 years. Blake's Men's Wear, at the Seaway Mall in Welland, and Benny in particular, who fits me for suits and jackets—

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Not the tux, though.

**Mr Kormos:** Not the tux. This tux, I've got to tell you, is courtesy of my colleague. It is a union-label tux. I'm very proud of Mr Prue for owning a tux that has a UNITE label in it, those women and men working in the needle trades.

**Mr Hampton:** Fair wages, safe working conditions.

**Mr Kormos:** It's fair wages, safer working conditions.

So I'm proud of my relationship with Blake's Men's Wear in Welland, and I encourage people: It's worth the drive to Welland, to go down to Blake's Men's Wear at Seaway Mall, Gord Blake carrying on the tradition of his father, Larry Blake; Benny, who's just an incredible guy, a great guy. Again, they sell good, Canadian-made clothing, union-label clothing, and that's why I shop there.

See, those are the sorts of standards New Democrats believe in. We believe in standards of fairness, we believe in standards of quality, quite frankly, in this Legislature, and I say to you that people here should be judged more on what they contribute to the debate, more on how aggressively and passionately and with how much dedication they pursue their jobs here, how fearless they are. Yes, New Democrats believe in standards for politicians, and we've had it up to here with gutless politicians. We've seen far too many of them, far too many politicians who campaign on one promise or a dozen or two or three dozen—

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**Ms Martel:** Or 231.

**Mr Kormos:** Or 231, and then once elected proceed to break each and every one of them in a systematic way.

So while I thank the author of this resolution for putting the NDP on front pages of papers and on television and radio coverage this week—again, I have folks who just shake their heads, saying, “Haven't the Liberals got better things to do?” Indeed, then they say, “I suppose they do, because only yesterday they broke their promise of the two-cent-a-litre gas tax transfer down to municipalities, which has socked it to municipalities,” which, as the member from Trinity-Spadina would say, whether he's suited with suit and tie or whether he's here in a clean, crisp white shirt, regardless, would say that this government whacked municipalities. From Toronto all the way down to the smallest town in this province, this government has whacked working women and men.

This government continues to insult the lowest wage workers in our society by giving them a crummy 30-cent increase in their minimum wage, which only takes them up to 1997 levels. By time the year 2007 comes—and who knows whether they'll even keep that promise, with the record they've established so far; in four years' time, who knows what promises they'll keep? But we know that minimum wage workers, because of this government



and its anti-worker policies, are going to be even further behind.

I say to this government and I say to the author of this resolution, it would have been so nice to see a government backbencher with guts, who'd stand up and condemn this government for not moving promptly on increasing ODSP benefits, which have remained stuck for over eight years now, leaving persons with disabilities mired in despair and poverty.

Shelley Martel and this caucus have been working hard on the issues of kids with autism.

**Interjection:** The member for Nickel Belt.

**Mr Kormos:** Yes, well, I call her Shelley Martel and she's from Nickel Belt. She has been working hard in this Legislature, along with New Democrats, on behalf of the rights of kids with autism. This Premier, Dalton McGuinty, promised those kids that they'd be funded for their treatment once they turned six. He has broken that promise too, and indeed he's got his hired guns in court whacking those families that are forced to use the courts to try to obtain some relief. Don't talk to us about standards; don't lecture us about dress codes, because we believe that it's the substance that's far more significant than the style or the form.

I say New Democrats, whether there's seven, whether there's 17, whether there's 28—

**Interjection:** Or 57.

**Mr Kormos:** —whether there's 57, New Democrats are going to work provincially, New Democrats are going to work federally, to fight for those people who need fighting for, to speak for those people who need speaking for, to stand up for those people who need help standing up for themselves and to stand up for those people who have been dumped on, trashed on, shoved aside, marginalized, beaten up on, whacked, for far too long by the Tories and now by the Liberals. Don't tell us what to wear while we're doing it, because we're going to do it one way or another, regardless.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I have a few remarks to make on this proposal, a proposal that I've given careful thought to, and at this point I have an open mind on it. I look upon the standing orders of this House as a set of guidelines intended to encourage debate and to promote freedom of expression, a set of guidelines that are here to contribute to the quality of the decisions that we make. I read them closely and I ask, what is decorum? Where in fact are the boundaries of respect?

The standing orders and the behaviour they're intended to promote are there to outlive the intended or the unintended behaviour of one or a few members, whether it be in this Parliament or in any future Parliament. I ask myself, and by extension the other members, can a standing order or should a standing order define, and if it defines, by extension should it enforce, a dress code? This gives rise to a number of interesting implications. Would, for example, further study of this bill lead to a hemline code for women? Would there be, for example, in this House or in committee, debate on the exact

measurement of the hemline and in fact on which measurement the hemline should be done? Should it be done in British or in metric?

It would lead to, for example, a number of not-so-hypothetical cases. Consider, for example, the case of the member for Simcoe North. The members here present know that when the member for Simcoe North wears a dress shirt and a tie, we expect in his questions, comments and interjections a sharp edge. Yet when we see him in the evening, in a more relaxed mode, wearing his turtleneck, we find from the member of Simcoe North a far more genteel and collegial attitude. Would, for example, a dress code discourage the member for Simcoe North from this?

I also ask members to consider the case of the member for Whitby-Ajax, always a well-dressed man. Should the member for Whitby-Ajax, a man whose dress code we find impeccable, choose to show up in the summertime and wear Bermuda shorts for a late night sitting, would a dress code discourage or prohibit this?

I ask consideration of my friend the member for Oak Ridges, whose choice in wardrobe has always been impeccable. Should the member for Oak Ridges choose to commemorate some event regarding the 1970s by wearing a polyester leisure suit—an event that I freely admit would be somewhat less probable than the freezing over of Hades—would this in fact be a violation of the dress code?

Dress code regulations, then, give rise to gamesmanship. Would a future or present whip with a list of real or perceived infractions of the dress code—hemline, necktie and polyester infractions—sit at his desk, awaiting a challenge just shortly before a vote? Would the offenders be named if found in violation, and if the allegation is found to be unfounded, would a commensurate member of the party making the allegations be required themselves to be named? Governments have fallen for less.

Such a proposed amendment, with all its implications for this and future governments, should be studied in much greater depth. In the meantime, it is worth noting that, whether dressed up or dressed down, the proposed amendment should be judged not upon its surface implications, but perhaps upon its contribution to the quantity and the quality of the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate? The member from Perth-Middlesex. I'm still working on these.

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** Yes, Mr Speaker, and still proud to be from Perth-Middlesex. I rise on this motion and I find it quite interesting. I want to tell a little story to the people back home and to the people here because, as I've mentioned many times, I'm a business person who graduated in music and performance, who went into business—perhaps a renaissance man.

One of the things I had to deal with in our business, where we were required to set the tone in a small business of what would be proper business attire—in our culture, one wears a suit and a tie and, over the years, I



must admit, particularly in rural Ontario, there's less of an emphasis than there was many, many years ago about wearing a suit and a tie. But on the other hand, we're not running a \$70-billion government either. We're not representing 12 million Ontarians either. So I think the standard would be higher.

I remember a young lady who was a co-op student. She came and worked at our firm. It was around the time when a very famous Canadian, Shania Twain, had just come on to the scene and Shania was an influence on many young women in this province and throughout—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wilkinson:** Yes, that's the point I was going to make. There was a new standard for young women, where it was acceptable for them to wear attire where their midriff was exposed. I think we all remember that, and I could tell you that many of the male members of this House remember that. I want people to know that I'm proud of Shania Twain. But this young lady, who was a co-op student from university, came and worked at our office. One day, she showed up at our business office, our place of business, and she was wearing this new style. Of course, we had to deal—we have a small firm; we didn't have a dress code. Being the senior partner of the firm, it was decided that I would have to speak to this young lady about the question of her attire. Of course, that is a very dangerous situation, Mr Speaker, I'm sure you could imagine. In a politically correct world, how would a middle-aged man like myself bring up this issue? What I told her was that we were going to introduce a dress code, and do you know what that dress code said? "No belly buttons. In our office, no belly buttons." Do you know why? Because I told the young lady that if she were able to wear attire which allowed her to bare—

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**The Deputy Speaker:** I remind the member to direct your remarks through the Chair.

**Mr Wilkinson:** Sorry, Mr Speaker.

I remember I said to her—and here was the reason; it was fairness—that if she were allowed to bare her midriff in our office, then all of us would be able to bare our midriffs in our office, and that would not be a pretty sight. A bunch of balding, paunchy, middle-aged men in our office baring their midriffs would show a lack of respect to our clients, a lack of decorum, so we decided that—nothing wrong with her navel—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Wilkinson:** That's right. But again, we had to show respect to our clients.

The question here is whether or not we're going to show respect to the good people of Ontario, people who tune in. I don't believe in political correctness, but I was listening to the member for Niagara Centre, and I was shocked because he went on and said that the most important thing is that we should wear Canadian clothing in this House, we should be wearing union-made clothing. With the greatest respect, if that is the case and that is his passionate belief, I don't believe a motion has ever

gone into this Legislature requiring that. I don't think that's ever happened. I could be wrong, but I don't think that's happened. So if we believe in something and we don't come into this House and actually make a motion, then one can talk and talk, but nothing changes. I think it's very important in this House in regard to this motion.

I would ask other members, all members from all parties, are we going to set a higher standard for ourselves or are we going to set a lower standard for ourselves? We have to marry that with the concern of a member that perhaps they need to have a different dress code than the rest of us to be effective. But it's the strength of your oratory that determines whether or not you are heard in this place and whether or not you can influence this place. In this House, as the Speaker has ruled, every seat is a good seat.

Our concern is that once we lower these standards, eventually this place will become irrelevant, and that would undermine democracy. That's why I'm proud of the member for Nipissing and her reminder that in the federal House the Speaker does not recognize people who do not have proper attire. I think that would be a fair and reasonable way to deal with it. The Speaker needs to have a motion that is fair, and I think that if we go ahead with this motion, that will allow the Speaker to have that discretion. Thank you to the members opposite for debating this today, and I look forward to the vote later on this morning.

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I hope I am suitably attired for this debate today. I'm pleased to join in this debate on decorum in the Legislature. To be honest, I can't believe we're here discussing the dress code here in the Legislature.

I know the member for Niagara Centre does have a sort of trademark style: his nicely pressed union white shirts that he wears in here, and I suppose he has cowboy boots on, although I haven't noticed those, and I don't think they come on the camera in the Legislature here very often. Personally, I don't think it really affects his work in the Legislature, and it certainly doesn't offend me. If he were wearing his tank top and sandals, maybe I'd have a different opinion about it, but I don't think there's really a need for a dress code based on the way all of the people in this Legislature currently dress. I am certainly not in any way offended by the way the member for Niagara Centre dresses.

The member from Nipissing was talking about having conservative standards in here. Well, my father was a Conservative member for many years in here and he was noted for how he dressed, and it wasn't really that conservatively; in fact, he was known for his Royal Stuart tartans, a fairly bright red plaid. He wasn't exactly a fashion statement, but it was his trademark. In fact, I wore that red plaid jacket at his funeral just because he was so well known for that jacket.

But I have to say that surely there must be something more serious and appropriate we could be discussing here. Perhaps we should be setting some standards for question period. I think we should have some standards



about answers in this place because, really, I haven't heard too many answers in this session of the Legislature. I think I could count on one hand the answers that were real answers to questions. I know I've asked three questions of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and he's given me the same answer for all three questions—and they were on three different topics. It was "\$5.6 billion, blah, blah, blah." That was the answer, as our finance critic was so eloquently saying last week. So I think there could certainly be some standards for question period.

In terms of tradition, I do think it's unfair where the third party has been placed in the House this session, with the government rump separating us from the other part of the opposition. I think it's more traditional that the opposition parties all be together.

I really do think that there should be something else of more importance that we could be discussing. I'm sure the member from Nipissing must have some important issues in the riding of Nipissing: perhaps northern tax incentive zones or the ONTC or how the municipalities are going to deal with nuisance bears or the Lake Nipissing fishery and the water quality in Lake Nipissing. I understand there are invasive species. I understand there have been some spiny water fleas found in Lake Nipissing. Maybe she could have a private member's bill to deal with the threat that is to the fishery—or taxation. I'm sure that the past member from Nipissing, our Premier Mike Harris, likely didn't introduce a bill like this. I haven't checked and researched, but I highly doubt that this was something he debated.

In terms of the decorum part of her private member's bill, I personally would like to see more decorum in this place, from a fairly practical perspective: just that it gets a little noisy in here. At times I find it difficult to hear responses and questions. So I personally would rather see it quieter. I think there are a lot of people out in the general public who are slightly aghast at how much heckling goes on in here from time to time. I would be in favour of the Speaker using his discretion in enforcing the rules a little more tightly and trying to keep things a little quieter in here. I think that would be a good thing. I think the general public would agree that would be a good thing. I don't think it's necessary to have a private member's bill to bring that about.

In conclusion, I would just like to wish all my constituents back in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy holiday season. This is the last day of the Legislature, and I will be voting against this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** My fellow parliamentarians, I think there are a number of issues that need to be deliberated upon here in this idea of a dress code brought forth by the MPP from Nipissing. First of all, as a new member, as a rookie legislator here in this Parliament, as you know, we were treated to a number of seminars and orientation days in which we were taught about not only the grandness of this building and its

deliberations, but we also learned about some of the wood carvings, the chamber protocol, and how to address the Speaker or how to negotiate ourselves in this chamber. It was with a great sense of pride, solemnity, grace and dignity that I think most of us, certainly the new incoming Liberal caucus members, conducted ourselves in this place. I think it's in that spirit that the MPP for Nipissing has actually brought forth this resolution.

**1040**

I would like to say, first of all, as Premier McGuinty has just authorized \$700,000 worth of funds for the third party, I'm glad to see that that money is now being put to good use by increasing or upgrading the dress code level of some of the NDP members. I'd also like to note for a moment that the MPP for Niagara Centre, in a true display of vanity—and as a physician, I'm licensed to actually diagnose narcissism—thought that this entire resolution was about him and about his particular dress code. But it's not, sir. There are larger issues, weightier issues and, frankly, I feel that this is really toying with the full weight of parliamentary democracy, whether it's in this chamber or other chambers provincially, federally or within the British Commonwealth.

I ask you, what does dress or attire actually signify? It signifies a code of respect, a way of conducting yourself, the fact that you may be considerably very serious about what you're attempting to accomplish. Yesterday, for example, we authorized the expenditure from the consolidated revenue fund of something on the order of about \$25 billion. This is a serious and weighty place. The decisions we make affect lives, whether it's dealing with some of the issues regarding autism, as the MPP from Nickel Belt has raised, or the minimum wage and so on. So there are a number of issues that I would take exception with.

The other thing, as well, is just a matter of the actual level of respect of the MPP for Niagara Centre, newly found and newly acquired probably an hour ago. I bring your attention to the Hansard of December 4, 2003, and I begin to quote as he was impugning the reputation of the Deputy Speaker in the chair. This illustrates to this chamber the level of actual respect that seems to emanate from the MPP for Niagara Centre:

"That leads me to believe that it must be about the money, because the Deputy Speaker earns an additional salary of \$12,616. I don't begrudge that. The Deputy Chairs of the committee of the whole also earn an extra \$9,291." And it goes on: "I've heard the phrase, 'It must be about the money; it's just the money; it's about the money and nothing else,'" and it goes on in that vein.

I say to you that those of us who have come to this chamber representing with honour and dignity and feeling the full weight and sense of parliamentary democracy—it's for that reason that we're moving forth this particular resolution.

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** It's unfortunate that our friends from the independent NDP have walked out of this chamber at this time. But what's in front of us is, in a sense, a serious matter. In my

view, it reflects a broader issue. When I decided to run as a candidate—many of us who are new here, over 30 of us, took this position very seriously, and our leader took it very seriously, and called upon us to run for office, to run on a platform and to get elected and bring serious debate and discussion and decision-making to this chamber. That's what I ran on, that platform.

Lately, a few of my friends, including my father, will watch this program on television and they'll say to me, "Who's the guy in the white shirt?" I've had to explain to my father that it's the member from Niagara Centre. "Why is he walking up and down with a white shirt on?" I've had to explain to my father, "Dad, that's the way he wants to dress." My father goes, "Doesn't anybody have any rules in the House, in the chamber, about this?"

My father and mother, similar to the member from Niagara Centre, are immigrants. He mentioned in his speech that his parents were immigrants; my parents were immigrants too. They came here and worked hard. They've retired. They're at home now, and my father watches this once in a while, and he'll ask that question to me again and again and again, "Who's the guy with the white shirt?" I just find it somewhat disrespectful. We have rules here that have existed for centuries, and I'm learning the rules myself. To come in with a suit and a tie is something that, I think, makes common sense and should be permitted.

I'm good friends with, or at least I'm friends with or have a talking relationship with the member for Beaches-East York.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** We're pals.

**Mr Berardinetti:** We're pals. At Christmastime he'll wear his Christmas ties. When we were on Toronto city council he wore some of the most colourful Christmas ties. Nonetheless, he had a tie on, and usually a suit. It created a sort of jovial atmosphere, yet it blended within a certain decorum or a certain way of presenting ourselves at council. The same should apply here.

I strongly feel that the motion brought forward by the member from Nipissing makes sense. It's reasonable. It brings a level of equality in here such that even though we have differences in how we debate, differences in our philosophy, differences in how we approach the problems of the province, at least we come here together dressed in a suit and tie, or the female equivalent of a suit and tie. As a lawyer, I know that if I went before a judge—I support a dress code and I think it's important that this resolution carry today.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I'm really pleased to join the debate here this morning. We're spending one hour of debate of private members' time on a dress code. Every member has the opportunity to use their time, but another time may not come around for this member, who knows, until the next session. I can say there are more important issues to deal with, but I'll deal with the motion as it stands.

Routine proceedings is what this applies to, which is members' statements, reports by committees, introduction of bills, motions, statements by the ministries and

responses, deferred votes, oral questions and petitions. So the resolution is to apply to the routine proceedings. It doesn't apply to debate in the House. It doesn't apply to night sittings in the House. It doesn't apply to committees of the assembly. So it's a very restricted motion.

There's also an issue here, and the Speaker may have to decide this on an interpretation issue, but it says, "Male members must wear a jacket, shirt and tie." Now I don't know whether a tie means a tie that I have or whether that applies to a bow tie. I'd hate to see the member for Essex be not properly attired, because, with his bow ties, he's one of the better-dressed members in this House. We'll have to see.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Tascona:** They're saying a tie is a tie, so there we go. You're in, Mr Speaker.

We look at this in terms of what we're debating here. They want more respect with respect to decorum and business attire, but there's no mechanism of how we do this. There's no direction in this motion as to what we're trying to accomplish. They're just saying that the Legislature should address this issue.

In the standing orders, which deal with the conduct of business in this House, standing order number 1 says that the Legislative Assembly and the committees of the Assembly conduct their business according to the standing orders. As you know, there is nothing in the standing orders with respect to decorum and how you dress in this Legislature, because what they deal with is substance in terms of how we deal with the business, and that's set out in standing order 1(b):

"The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members,

"to submit motions, resolutions and bills for the consideration of the assembly and its committees, and to have them determined by democratic vote

"to debate, speak to, and vote on motions, resolutions and bills

"to hold the government accountable for its policies; and

"collectively, to decide matters submitted to the assembly or a committee."

In any contingencies, you go to the conventions, which are matters dealing with democratic rights. The focus of our standing orders is to deal with democratic rights and conduct in the House.

1050

I'm debating here right now and people are speaking while I'm trying to debate. This is a place for debate; it's not a place for conversations in the House. I say that what we're trying to focus on here is conduct in the House. That's what's important in terms of substance, and the Speaker is in charge of that. It's up to the Speaker in terms of how the House is going to conduct itself. That's not an easy job, because when you're dealing with—in essence, what's in the standing orders is conduct to enforce and respect your democratic rights. That's what's important. When you listen to question period,



you can't hear a speaker or you can't hear the questions because members are yelling and whatever. It would also apply to trying to enhance the debate when you are the speaker. There are people trying to speak, and then other people are having a conversation. They should have the conversation outside, in terms of respect for the House.

There are other things that I think the member from Muskoka-Parry Sound was talking about in terms of conduct in the House and the respect you have in the House. There are other matters in terms of ministers not responding to your question, and you can't get back at them because they haven't responded to the question, because we have limited time with respect to question period.

You also have ministers' statements. I responded to a minister's statement the other day with respect to human rights. I got the minister's statement at the same time that the minister was making the statement. Is that respect for the other members in the House, to encourage debate? I don't think it is. The fact of the matter is, the standing orders don't provide for that, but I think common courtesy and respect for the democratic process here would be that if ministers are going to do a statement and they know who the critic is, they should provide that statement. It's all printed up, they're reading it, and they should provide that statement before they make it. Then the other members from the recognized parties can get up and comment on that statement.

The same thing applies to government bills. There is no requirement in the standing orders to give advance notice of a government bill. "On the introduction of a government bill, a compendium of background information shall be delivered to the critics of the recognized opposition parties." It doesn't mention when. What is happening is that they are being delivered at the same time the bill is happening. How is that fair in terms of getting intelligent debate in a democratic process?

Those are things which I think are more important than speaking about how someone decides to dress as they come in here. What's important is the substance of the debate. This is supposed to be a debating society in here with respect to legislation. It doesn't help when ministers don't provide their statements, when the government doesn't provide their bills, and then we're expected to get up and comment on something we've never seen. That's just not something that is going to enhance debate in this House. It's not going to advance democracy as set out in the standing orders.

There are important issues and I think the member from Niagara Centre pointed that out, and the member from Muskoka-Parry Sound did also. There are important issues that have to be addressed.

I guess every member can use their one hour of time with respect to a private member's bill, but it doesn't come up too often. I've been here about eight and a half years and I've been lucky to get maybe four to five private member's bills in the time I've been here. It's very valuable and scarce time. I would like to see the government live up to their commitment to provide

private members with more time. I was on the Legislative Assembly committee and we recommended that. There should be more time for private members to do issues that concern them, so they can get that out there. That has not been provided at this point in the Legislature.

There are important issues that should be addressed. There have been promises that have been broken with respect to hydro. There is no more funding coming out for health care or education, because the government says they've got a deficit. They don't know how to handle it. The main thing is they don't know how to handle government. The bottom line is, they're not giving health care more funding and they're not giving education more funding.

There are serious issues out there in my own riding with respect to the hospital that serves the entire area of Simcoe county. We need another hospital in my riding. That's what's important in terms of health care for my constituents. Across the province our population is growing older. We need more long-term care facilities and more beds for the aged. That's something that should be debated and discussed in this Legislature. It's a pressing problem.

We have a situation with respect to autism that the member from Nickel Belt has worked on very hard. It's a very important issue, with respect to funding IBI treatment for children who are older than six years of age. I have a constituent in my riding who has three children of very young ages who are autistic. The funding that's needed for autism is an issue that should be debated in this Legislature, rather than just being put aside to question period and trying to see if the government is going to live up to its commitment with respect to autism funding. They made the commitment that they would provide more funding for autistic children to give them the treatment they need. That promise hasn't been kept.

The gas tax, which was mentioned earlier by the member from Niagara Centre, and the two-cent transfer down, is an important issue for everybody here, whether you live in Windsor, whether you live in Barrie or whether you live in Oakville—whoever relies on public transit. The municipalities are cash strapped. They need more money for public transit. That was the method that was going to provide the public transit system we need. That is now another broken promise, with respect to the funding the municipalities need. The provincial government is not going to act on its promise about the gas tax.

We have a litany of broken promises—important issues that should be debated in this Legislature—but what we're focusing on here right now is proper dress attire. That is something that I think is really in the discretion of the Speaker. The Speaker knows how to handle the House in terms of what's important. What's more important is what the standing orders stand for and what we abide by; that is, they're interested in conduct and procedures, they're interested in the debate, they're interested in making sure the government is accountable. They make sure we have an efficient operation of



government in terms of the conduct here, so that when people ask questions, the minister responds and people can hear what the minister is saying, and that when we get into debate, we don't get into yelling and people can speak and make sure they're heard with respect to what they want to talk about. This is what it's about; it's a debating society.

There are things we're going to need to do with respect to the standing orders, and I know the government has mentioned that. They're going to do things to give private members more power, which will require changes in the standing orders. That's what's important here, not how someone decides to dress. I think it's their conduct—how they conduct themselves in this Legislature—that is the substance that's important here. For us to focus on saying, "This is what you're going to wear if you're a female; this is what you're going to wear if you're a male," is all well and fine. But I leave it to the discretion and confidence I have in the members of this assembly, to their common sense, and to the discretion the Speaker has to deal with how this House is going to conduct itself in a very important manner. That's what's important. Respect in the Legislature between members is what's important. I don't believe respect is dictated by what you wear. There are limits, of course, but I haven't seen that in this Legislature.

When we talk about what's important in terms of legislation and what we're trying to accomplish in this House, I don't want to leave the viewing audience here thinking, "What are they doing here? Why is the MPP for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford up there talking about how someone dresses? We didn't send him down there to talk about how someone dresses. Doesn't he have something better to do?" Well, just to be clear, it's the member from North Bay's private member's resolution that we're debating here in private members' business today. It's not what we would have put forth, I don't think. What I would put forth when I get to my private member's resolution or bill would be the pressing issues, in terms of what I think is important for my riding and what I think is important that we should deal with in this Legislature.

I think it's certainly within the discretion of the Speaker. Certainly the House leaders can deal with the standing orders, if they feel they should be changed. But there's nothing in this resolution that will do anything different or give us direction on where to go.

1100

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nipissing has two minutes to reply.

**Ms Smith:** I'd like to thank my colleagues from Etobicoke North, Perth-Middlesex and Scarborough Southwest for their comments on my resolution this morning. I'd also like to thank my colleague in the official opposition, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, who spoke about his father. Unfortunately he was not here when I spoke about his father, but I would like to remind him that I was a page here when I was 12. I knew your father and appreciated his plaid blazers.

I'd also like to thank the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I note that he commented about chatter in the

House, how this is a place for debate and that we should be shown respect. I would ask that he share that thought with his seatmate, the member for Durham, who notoriously speaks through all of our comments and statements on a regular basis.

I also found it interesting to note that the members of the official opposition are against a dress code in this House. However, they were in support of uniforms in schools. It's an interesting double standard that they propose.

I'd like to respond as well to my colleague from Niagara Centre. I do agree that there are a number of important issues we could be discussing. I find it interesting, however, that you noted that the flood of publicity this has caused for you has led you to be out of the House and not able to debate the important issues we've been debating here for the last week as you've been out doing your media. There have been important issues, and we have been here debating them. But we're glad you're here today.

I would like the members here to take away from this debate a couple of important points. Tradition is important. This Legislature is important. We should maintain a level of respect, a level of civility, a level of decorum. I have respect for this Legislature and its traditions, and I know that most members in this House do as well. I would just like to remind the member for Niagara Centre of his quote from November 24, when he said in this Legislature, "Convention is important in this institution; not to say there isn't evolution, of course not, but convention and tradition are important."

#### FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

**Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls):** I'm pleased to move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario condemns the previous government for its neglect and mismanagement of the Family Responsibility Office and directs the current government of Ontario to clean up the mess and hold deadbeats to their family responsibilities.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Mr Craitor has moved private member's notice of motion number 4. The member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

**Mr Craitor:** I'm pleased to see my motion being debated in the Legislature today. For too long our children have suffered because previous governments have neglected the responsibilities laid upon them. The very title of the office we're seeking to change, the Family Responsibility Office, is our first clue that families in Ontario depend on us to help deal with what is already a very difficult situation. In this motion, I call on the government to clean up the mess in the Family Responsibility Office. I have committed to the people in my riding of Niagara Falls, the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the areas of Thorold South and Port Robinson that we will deal with the mess we have inherited and fix the problems that plague this vital agency.

I'm sure all members here have heard the problems first-hand from constituents, eager for someone to help



them deal with this mass of disorganization. My office has been inundated on a daily basis with people frustrated by the problems they are encountering at the Family Responsibility Office. I'd like to outline some of the problems my community office in Niagara Falls has dealt with in the short time since I was elected as an MPP two and a half months ago.

People wanting to speak to representatives at the Family Responsibility Office can expect at least an hour's wait on hold before their call is answered. One woman we worked with had to take an entire day off work just to try to get through to a representative at the Family Responsibility Office. This is unbelievable, and it's outrageous.

The Provincial Auditor found that more than 13,000 calls placed to the Family Responsibility Office have received a busy signal each day and go unanswered. Eighty-nine per cent of all calls made to the Family Responsibility Office are blocked by a busy signal—unbelievable. I guess it's only the lucky ones who wait for hours on hold who might get through.

Each time a call is made to the Family Responsibility Office, a different person looks on the computer and talks to the individual, so the parent who is waiting to receive much-needed funds from their former spouse never speaks to the same representative each time they call in. What does this say about the priority of our children and families in Ontario? Often letters and faxes sent to the Family Responsibility Office are either never answered or only acknowledged when they become obsolete.

Another person who contacted my office expressed how frustrating it is to provide the Family Responsibility Office with information about where her former spouse is working or where he has moved to, only to have that information ignored, and an opportunity to collect money owed passes by this family that desperately needs this financial support. This woman was owed more than \$300,000 in arrears from her former spouse. The Family Responsibility Office is unable to pick up the fax and get the information processed in a timely fashion. This is absolutely outrageous.

It is apparent to anyone who looks at this situation that the Financial Responsibility Office is understaffed and poorly managed. Therefore, it is this government's responsibility to fix the problems before more families fail to receive the support they need and we have more families and children living in poverty. Too many of our children are being neglected by parents who brought them into this world.

The problems with the Family Responsibility Office are not new. The Provincial Auditor found that caseloads have doubled, from 630 per worker in 1994 to an appalling 1,129 cases per worker in 2003. While the number of incoming calls increased significantly during that period, the number of workers have actually decreased by 20%. I'm quoting facts taken directly from the auditor's report in 2003. I was astounded to read some of the things the auditor found as he conducted his audit of the Family Responsibility Office. I know that my community must

not be alone in the number of complaints and requests for assistance that we are given on a daily basis.

The Provincial Auditor found that there is \$1.3 million of support money in arrears. Let me repeat: \$1.3 million in arrears. This is outrageous, and is our first indication that the enormous underlying issues have contributed to the poverty of families that have gone without.

I have pledged to my community of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Thorold South and Port Robinson that I would bring these concerns to Queen's Park and work on their behalf. I'm proud to raise this important issue in the House. I'm hoping that by doing so, I'll be helping and we'll be helping all the families that are so desperately in need.

Our government must start to get tough on parents that shirk their moral, financial and legal obligations to support their children. By refusing to provide adequate support, parents are abusing their children. As a government, we must take more of an effort to hold these deadbeat parents accountable. When our children suffer, our society as a whole suffers. It must become a priority for all members of this House to take a stand on supporting this motion.

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** The member from Niagara Falls raises a fundamental question. He asks whether we believe there should be a Family Responsibility Office or not. In the absence of the FRO, is there any risk or sanction for defaulting on one's family responsibilities? With some 180,000 family responsibility cases under administration by the FRO, serial defaulters can hide in a forest of anonymity, of sheer numbers. Most recipients of family responsibility payments use these payments to get by, not to buy themselves life's finer things.

**1110**

FRO statistics show that only one third of all payers are in full compliance. I say to single mothers who struggle in the snow with bags of groceries that if Ontario says it will help you collect the funds due you, legally negotiated and mandated, then Ontario should be serious about it.

We either have a Family Responsibility Office or we don't. And if we have a Family Responsibility Office, then we either believe in it or we don't. And if we have a Family Responsibility Office and we believe in it, then we either make it work or we don't. If we don't make the Family Responsibility Office work, then what is there to differentiate this government from its predecessor?

Those who receive benefits from the operation of the Family Responsibility Office number among the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society.

The member from Niagara Falls condemns the previous government in his motion. The track record of the FRO condemns the previous government in its sorry litany of statistics:

—While the number of caseworkers has been cut by 20%, the cases under management are up by 50%.

—Caseworkers' loads have doubled, from an average of 600 per caseworker to more than 1100, while case-

loads in Quebec are 400 per caseworker and caseloads in Alberta—Tory-governed Alberta—are 335 per caseworker. This is not a question of faulty political ideology; it is more a question of systemic managerial incompetence by the former government.

—Outside Toronto, nearly 90% of telephone calls made are blocked—never answered; a busy signal. People whose lives teeter on the edge of desperation must reach a point of unmanageable frustration when their cries for help cannot or will not be answered.

—One third of FRO cases, that is, 60,000 cases, are in non-compliance. There is no significant downside for defaulting on FRO commitments.

Fortunately, the 2003 annual report of the Office of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario offers a few recommendations, recommendations that this government should consider seriously and act upon:

“In order for all necessary case documentation to be available on a timely basis for administering cases and for advancing telephone inquiries, the Office should ensure that:

“All necessary case documentation is scanned,” as it is not now;

“Scanned documents are of an acceptable quality,” which they are not now; “and

“System downtime is minimized,” which it is not now.

“To ensure the office fulfill its responsibilities to collect and forward support payments to families, it should ensure that it receives all the required information for registering and enforcing support obligations on a timely basis and properly initiate follow-up action when it does not.” It does not now.

“To help ensure that effective and timely enforcement actions are taken, the office should review its case management practices and consider assigning responsibility for each case to an individual caseworker.” We have heard from the member for Niagara Falls that each time someone calls in and asks, “What is the progress of my case?” there is no one that can say, “I know your case. I’m on top of it. I’ve done something.” It’s just a file in a computer. Each time you get a different person; each time you have to reinvent the wheel. There is nothing like having an assigned caseworker. We use assigned caseworkers in other aspects of social services. Why cannot the Family Responsibility Office use an assigned caseworker?

The Provincial Auditor says, “To help improve the administration of family support cases in a timely and effective manner, the office should establish criteria and standards for manageable caseloads and staff accordingly to ensure that the standards are met.” The FRO has been the victim of benign neglect and perhaps not-so-benign neglect. Maybe it would help to simply put some more people at it. Staff has been cut by 20%. We should restore some of those staff.

“To help ensure that client inquiries and enforcement actions are dealt with appropriately, the office should ensure that all caseworkers conduct the necessary follow-up work on a timely basis”—again a question of appro-

priate staffing, a question of dedication of appropriate resources.

Thank you, Speaker. I’ll allow some other members time to speak on this resolution.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I’m just going to speak very briefly to leave some time for my colleague the member for Niagara Centre. I’d also say that the member for Nickel Belt is unable to take part in this debate but would like to. As you will recall, it was the member for Niagara Centre and the member for Nickel Belt who, during the early years of the Tory government, in 1995, when the caseloads at the FRO and everything was falling apart, broke into the new offices to discover that the computers were all sitting in hallways and nothing was being done. They played a huge role in at least getting public attention paid to the terrible situation of that office at the time.

I commend Mr Craitor for bringing this forward today. I just want to point out that posting pictures of the deadbeat dads, although it is a good idea, is not going to resolve the problem. I believe, as I listened to his comments, that he’s aware of that. What is needed here is fundamental: To fix the systemic problems within the FRO, it needs resources, plain and simple. I think he’s acknowledged that as well. You can fiddle around with how casework is actually done, but if you don’t have the front-line workers there to answer those phones—and I agree with him that it should go back to the way it used to be, where caseworkers are assigned specifically to the same cases.

Under the previous Tory government, that has happened across the board in social services, in welfare and other areas. It’s creating huge problems to not have a consistent worker who knows your situation, who knows your case. In fact, it’s not cost-effective to do it that way, because each time somebody does manage to get through, they’re dealing with a whole new person who has to reinvent the wheel in some ways.

I want to point out in my couple of minutes here that after the speech by the finance minister yesterday talking about a deficit, which we believe—the evidence is there—the government knew about anyway and made these promises, I’m really, really concerned that the extra resources are needed now, not after consultation—we know what’s needed. As Mr Craitor pointed out, we need the resources put into the FRO right now.

So I am going to support this resolution today and will pledge to work with Mr Craitor—he can work on the inside of government; I can work on the outside with my colleagues—to make sure that the needed resources, enough resources, are put back into that office now, tomorrow, to stop this pathetic, unbelievable actually, situation for mothers and their kids.

We have to remember when we are speaking about this to not just think about numbers and statistics. We are talking about children, some of whom are going hungry because they are not getting the money they deserve. So let’s keep the faces of those kids in mind as we try to force, pressure the government into putting those resources that are badly needed back in the FRO.



**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** I am really pleased to stand here today and speak on the motion brought forward by the member for Niagara Falls. He has touched on a systemic problem that many of our offices, as in our constituencies, are inundated with. I would say that 60% of the complaints that come into my office are about the dysfunction of the FRO offices. In April 2003—over the last four years, I have certainly brought to the attention of the minister and the Ombudsman a number of the issues relating to this office. It is a dysfunction.

1120

What I asked my constituency office to do is to actually record what the complaints are, coming forward from people who are using this office. Let's remember that government offices such as the FRO are supposed to be there to serve the public. These are some of the problems that have come to my constituency office that we have encountered with the FRO service.

Oftentimes, the constituents can't get through to speak to a client service representative on the toll-free number. They just can't get through to speak to any individual. Updating by the finance department has, on many occasions, been very slow. Lifting of federal garnishments is often an oversight. These are situations we've had to deal with, and these are very significant impacts on people's lives.

There have also been many times where new court orders or amended court orders are not actioned for several months. In other words, people go through all the pain of getting the court orders changed, yet months go by before those are actually implemented. Again, it creates financial hardships for the recipients.

There are also many times where we found a lot of lack of attention to detail. It's a systemic problem, and it may be created because we don't have the technology in place that we require; possibly we have cut the people who are working in FRO offices so much that they're unable to handle the workload. As we've seen from the Provincial Auditor's report, the caseload is something like 1,400 per individual working at the FRO office. That's way, way too big a caseload for any individual to be able to handle.

I'm mentioning these specific issues because even the Ombudsman spoke to this; I believe it was in his 2002-03 report. What he said in his report of that time was that the Family Responsibility Office consistently generated the second-highest number of complaints to his office. This is an Ombudsman trying to restore a level of fairness in how a service is delivered.

He goes on to say, "The FRO performs a uniquely significant service for individuals and families who rely on its enforcement of support orders for their income." I have certainly seen come through my office a number of cases whereby the families in question on the receiving end of support had to go on welfare because it had been months and months and they had not received any kind of support they were entitled to. So there's something wrong with the system.

The member from Niagara Falls has certainly touched a nerve, touched on an area that we, as government, have to take a look at and really try to address so we have an office that will be functional, will be effective and will do its job in facilitating these areas, these issues much better than it is now.

One of the interesting parts is that it's all about being able to manage this service in a way that's more effective. I've certainly had constituents complain that they've submitted information to the FRO office—I mean, these are just examples of why it doesn't work at times—and there's no confirmation of the information having been received or actioned. Many times, I know we have had to submit the same information over and over again, because it seems to get lost in a big, black hole.

I want to commend the newly elected member from Niagara Falls. We have to deal with this mess. It's not just a fiscal mess. I believe it's a function of government to make sure that its services are provided effectively and appropriately, because after all, government is here to serve the public.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to the resolution. I think the member for Sarnia-Lambton concluded in the proper way that this is what government is for. I just want to remind the member opposite for Niagara Falls that you are the government. You're not in the blame game any more; you're in the game of fixing problems that you think exist. The fact that this is not a government bill, that there has been no government action on this, speaks volumes.

Of course we share the principle that deadbeat parents should be held accountable. Who doesn't share that principle? That has been a tremendous problem not only for the previous government in trying to deal with it but back to the 1980s. I'll take the member back for a little history lesson if he doesn't know how this originated. Prior to 1987, it used to be that child support payments and their enforcement was through the court system exclusively. It was the courts that got the judgment and it was the courts that also enforced that judgment. When the Liberals were elected in 1985, then Attorney General Ian Scott in his wisdom felt that the court system was good for getting judgments but not so good in terms of enforcing those judgments. It was Ian Scott who took it upon himself, with the Liberal government of the day, to bring in government involvement to make sure there would be a better enforcement mechanism.

Unfortunately, because the problem, as the member stated, is the accountability of deadbeat parents, it's easy to get that judgment but not so easy to enforce that judgment. That's where the problem lies and where the work needs to be done. Let's be honest: Maybe we'll never solve this problem in terms of people trying to evade payment. Yes, there is a human cost to children and the people involved. That is a human cost on all of us that we have to deal with, because we're in a just society. We have to own up and face that we have to help the people. People who have a deadbeat parent situation may



have to go on welfare, look for other sources to support their family.

So the blame game from the member for Niagara Falls isn't helpful here. What's helpful here is that the government, the minister responsible, brings in legislation or changes regulations now to deal with an issue that he feels so strongly about. Accountability is what's important.

Ian Scott, the Attorney General of those days, brought about a mechanism for enforcement through the government that was not as successful as it could be. It was fine-tuned somewhat by the NDP government, but that didn't solve the problem, because there were too many people who were not paying and there was a lot of pain because people were not paying.

It was the PC government that established the Family Responsibility Office and introduced tough new enforcement methods for non-payments such as suspending drivers' licences, using private bill collectors and reporting defaults to credit bureaus, to name a few methods of enforcement. The result was a 50% increase in the amount of money collected since 1994-95. FRO collected a record \$555 million in court-ordered support payments during the 2001-02 period, a 50% increase since 1994-95, when we collected \$368 million in court-ordered support payments. We're moving in the right direction in terms of getting the judgments enforced. Ninety-five percent of court-ordered support payments received are processed within 24 to 48 hours, as compared to up to 10 days before our government reformed the system.

1130

We increased the number of court-ordered support payments deposited directly into the recipients' bank accounts. This has improved efficiency. That's what it's all about: getting the money to where it's supposed to go. I tell the member, it starts from the court system when there is a judgment. From that judgment, it has to be enforced.

Other improvements made by the Family Responsibility Office since 1998 included: expanding the availability of automated client information telephone lines to 24 hours, 7 days a week—that is an improvement; expanding the use of electronic payment methods; increasing the speed and accuracy of processing payments; and allowing employers to make payments on behalf of payers through the Internet—methods to improve the way payments are made.

The NDP objected to any user fees being associated with FRO. To deal with that, there was only one fee that was paid by the support recipient, which is \$25 for their payment record. This is only charged if they need more than the one free copy that they receive. If the participants keep track of their payments and receipts or use the automated telephone line, they will never need this document. In cases of financial hardship, they may ask the director of the Family Responsibility Office to waive the fee, so the fee was not ever an issue with respect to this particular document, which is the payment record.

I believe the government enforcement mechanism, whatever you want to call it, whether it's the Family

Responsibility Office or another name, has improved. It's more effective. It's a more accountable system that focuses on getting money into the hands of women and children. That is the major focus; that's what it's all about. Sure, there are mechanisms for the debtor not wanting to pay and evading service. That's the challenge.

These changes were necessary because there were backlogs—if you can believe it, member, because you weren't here—and inefficiencies in the Liberal and the NDP governments. That's why this is an ongoing problem. The Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act is simplifying and streamlining the collections system, making it easier for children to get the money they are entitled to, regardless of where the parents live. I've been in this Legislature for over eight years. I think that everybody who has been here has had issues with respect to the Family Responsibility Office, but one of the major issues is deadbeat parents who leave the province, and also deadbeat parents who can find ways—even though they're in business and have a brand new truck, somehow they can evade, because they're in private business or in their own business, making any payments. Even when you can suspend their drivers' licence, you can do things with their credit bureau, they're still not paying. It's the human will not to protect your children which is the problem here. I don't understand it; I don't know how anyone could understand it but you have a court system that works to make sure you get the judgment. What the government is trying to do is to make sure that that judgment is enforced. Some people don't want it to be enforced, and they'll find all kinds of different ways to do it, so don't blame the people who are trying to make sure that they get the money. Take a little focus on the people who aren't paying it. That's what the exercise has been about in terms of trying to get these people to pay.

Between September 1997 and March 2002, the PC government suspended almost 16,000 drivers' licences, which led to the recovery of \$190 million in outstanding court-ordered support payments. Obviously, that was a mechanism that worked. It's kind of obvious, but it's a mechanism that worked. It's not the mechanism that solved all the problems. One would think that that would be enough, but obviously it wasn't.

Overall, there have been aggressive enforcement measures introduced during the prior eight years that have been more successful in getting monies to families and children than were used under the former governments. If this government's going to come up with new and better enforcement mechanisms to make sure the money goes to where it belongs, that's what this is all about. It's not going to happen through your resolution, because that's what it is—a resolution.

When you look at the two parts of the problem, or how the system works, there isn't a problem with respect to getting the judgment, and there's not a problem, it would appear to me, when we say that 95% of court-ordered support payments received are processed within 24 to 48 hours, as compared to up to 10 days before the FRO system came into place. So let's look at the facts here.



The problem is what other mechanisms you can use. We're using the interjurisdictional court support order payment system. We're using suspending drivers' licences. We're using different methods, as I indicated, to try to get payment made.

What's important here is, you look at what your government promised to do. Don't play the blame game here. You said during the campaign, under your Growing Strong Communities—and I'm joined here now by the member from Durham—"We will crack down on deadbeat parents and make them pay up. Withholding family support payments is a serious crime. It makes the lives of single parents even tougher, and it hurts our kids. We will not watch children suffer while deadbeat parents shirk their responsibilities." Well, who would? That's all motherhood.

"Deadbeat parents in Ontario owe more than \$1 billion to their partners and children. We will use innovative new techniques such as Internet tracking to find deadbeats and recover the money they owe. We will pursue aggressive enforcement measures such as suspending drivers' licences for anyone missing two or more support payments." We're already doing that.

Yes, there is an issue in terms of finding the deadbeat parent. That's the main issue—to find them. The bigger issue is to find their money, whether it's in a bank account or wherever else they put it. I know a personal situation of a mother of three children. The father has left the country; he's gone somewhere else. Believe me, the work that she's had to do, and without lawyers, to try to get the money to support their children—that's the problem in terms of that deadbeat parent: trying to find them and get that money.

I am all ears to find out what you're going to do with, as you say in your campaign, "innovative, new techniques such as Internet tracking to find deadbeats and recover the money they owe." Well, you're going to have to do a little bit more than that. I'd like to see what the government's going to do with respect to bills. I think what they could do—they can do it immediately, they can do it through regulation, they can do it through order in council to bring in other mechanisms. They don't have to wait. They could have done it a month and a half ago—they've been here that long—in terms of implementing their promises. That's what's important, because it's the regulations in that statute for the Family Responsibility Office that are going to be the teeth of what you're going to accomplish.

To the member from Niagara Falls, of course one wants accountability in the system. You got elected on promises that you're going to do something about it. It's your job as a backbencher not to come here and say, "Oh, the previous government didn't do a good job; we're going to do better." Why don't you go to your government minister and say to them, "What are you going to do? We don't need a bill. We want the regulations changed now."

If we're all going to vote on this here today, one would expect that the minister is going to come up with

something immediately because the Legislature has spoken. We all know that the ministers have their own discretion in terms of how to deal with a resolution. They can deal with that resolution and not respond to that resolution for up to six months.

The member from Durham, in his wisdom, is here. I want to mention that the member on the previous bill mentioned decorum, that we have to be very careful about how we conduct ourselves in this House, but the member from Durham is very nicely dressed today, and I think he is looking very good. So I'm going to conclude; because he's so properly dressed, how can I continue?

1140

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** I heard that member's final comments. John is not the one. Mr O'Toole is certainly not the one who needs advice about decorum. As the one person in this assembly who, digitally or otherwise, lets himself be known, I've always known Mr O'Toole to be a person of great decorum indeed. I regard him as number one.

The resolution warrants support. However, take a look at what's happening here. I want to tell the Liberal members, you won the election. You see, this is the "blame the previous government" syndrome. What you're doing is not rocket science. Of course, you worded the resolution in such a way that maybe Tories will feel uncomfortable voting for it, because it says "condemn the previous government."

Look, this isn't news. Back in 1996, the member from Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, concocted a scheme to break into the Family Responsibility Office and persuaded me to go with her, against my better judgment. Well, I didn't want to; she made me. At 7 in the morning, we go in there with a cameraperson, and we find the place in total disarray. We find the place inoperative. What happened, as you know full well, is that the government of the day, one Attorney General called one Mr Charles Harnick, my former friend, had shut down 10 regional offices and tried to consolidate them in North York, up at the MTO building.

Shelley and I had been hearing stories week after week, and had been raising them in the House, about the fact that this office was inoperative, literally not hooked up. So we go there. You didn't have to break into the place. It wasn't much of a B and E, because you walked in. There was no security; the doors were unlocked. The hallways—first floor, second floor, third floor, fifth floor etc, and the videotape confirmed this—were strewn with files in unsecured cardboard boxes that anybody could access. We indeed did.

Then when we got into the rooms, which were supposedly operative, there were all sorts of uncrated computers and/or computers uncabled, unconnected, phones that weren't hooked up, there was no dial tone—the place was in a thorough shambles, no two ways about it. The sad thing was that Shelley and I, and other New Democrats as well, had been confronting the Attorney General of the day, one Mr Harnick, about this, who had been insisting that it was up and running, that it was

operative, that we were, oh, making a mountain out of a molehill etc. The videotape spoke for itself, and a darn good thing we did videotape it, because my bacon was in the fire there for a few minutes. The videotape proved to be valuable in more ways than I had anticipated.

Since 1996, we've had auditor's report after auditor's report, year after year, confirming that the FRO—FSP, as it was originally called—simply wasn't up to snuff. I remember the lacklustre efforts to somehow try to distract attention away from the de-funding of it, the de-staffing of it, by saying, "We're going to implement new enforcement methods." Look, it's not about the enforcement mechanisms; it's about ensuring there's enough staff there with the tools to do the job that they've got to do to handle the court orders that are being filed and make sure they're properly processed. Deadbeat parents—let's be careful; deadbeat parents are deadbeat parents and, as the former speakers indicated, they're adept at evading responsibility.

The problem is, it isn't the deadbeats per se who are causing the real problems. They're problematic, of course, inherently, but it's the fact that the office still doesn't have adequate computer systems, still doesn't have adequate levels of staffing to deal with the load of support orders that they have to administer—end of story. It's not about finding more enforcement mechanisms; it's about getting staff and resources into that office, and it's about reconsidering the prospect of restoring regional offices. Please.

So to the author of this resolution, in your response—yes, once again, à la Jerry McGuire, it's about the resources that this government is going to give the FRO to do that job. They've been grossly underfunded. They were crushed and broken by the previous government. I acknowledge that. I think that's clear, and increasingly clear every year when the auditor releases yet another damning report about the status of the FRO.

Shelley Martel and I determined, back in 1996, that you've got to get the place up and running. The auditor says, once again, that they still haven't got current computer resources. It takes money. Now we've got a government that is saying it's not going to keep any of its election promises, that it's looking to cut another \$4 billion from services being provided to the public. More cuts to the FRO? What are you going to cut next? You certainly haven't indicated—and I look forward to the author of this resolution telling us—where this government is going to find the necessary funds to get the FRO back up and running, where it's going to find the necessary funds to, if need be—and I believe it is necessary—restore some of the regional offices.

Show us the money, Mr Craitor. It's not enough to condemn the previous government. The electors did that. It's your turn now. Show us the money.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville):** I rise today in support of the motion of my colleague the member for Niagara Falls. Experience has taught me over the years that quite often before you can start to fix something, you

need to understand the issue and admit that a problem even exists.

In this case, the conduct and the efficiency of the Family Responsibility Office was brought to my attention very shortly after being elected. Being newly elected, I took over the office of my predecessor, the former Speaker of the House, Oakville MPP Mr Carr. Even though the business of government may have ground to a halt for the election period, the problems people experienced on a daily basis kept going and the phone continued to ring. Having no staff hired at the time, I began to answer the phone myself and set about the task of solving some of the problems.

Quite early, I began to hear the term "FRO" and quickly learned that it stood for the Family Responsibility Office. It also soon became apparent that the name of this office was rarely or never used in a positive sense. Ordinary people talked of being left on hold for long periods of time, calls not being returned, files being lost or simply mixed up. Sometimes people would hang up in frustration. Cheques would go uncollected. Families or children would simply go short on food or rent or clothes until somehow the Family Responsibility Office got around to sorting out their personal information.

What people claimed they met when attempting to deal with the Family Responsibility Office was a system in which it appeared that provincial employees were sincere but hopelessly overworked. Employee morale appeared to be at an all-time low. The staffing of this office under the previous Tory government was simply inadequate to the task at hand. Clients knew it, staff knew it, members of the Tory government at the time knew it, and yet nothing appeared to be done to correct the situation.

Once again, the previous government appeared to have left the most vulnerable people of our society to fend for themselves. While appointed executives were being paid outrageous sums of money to drive OPG further and further into the ground and the province further and further into debt, the most vulnerable people, the people who could have used our resources the most, were denied access. It seems the previous government simply ignored and mismanaged an office that was designed to help people when they needed it most. Single moms and dads, children of separated families, victims of deadbeat moms and dads were left to fend for themselves with a system that had no hope of coping with the problems and tragedy these people faced on a daily basis. Provincial employees have informed me that the Family Responsibility Office has now become the quagmire that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board used to be.

It was clear from my first experience that something was amiss and needed to be fixed. I finally tracked down the number of the MPP liaison for the Family Responsibility Office. This call was made in about mid-October. I was greeted by a recorded message that said something to the effect—and remember, this is in mid-October—"This is"—blank—"the MPP liaison for the Family Responsibility Office. It's Thursday, August 14. I'll be



out of the office for a few days.” This is in mid-October that I’m making this phone call. Can you imagine, if you’re a client or a mother or father trying to feed or clothe your children and you get greeted with a phone call like that? That is simply inexcusable.

Although I was newly elected, I certainly knew something was seriously wrong and needed to be fixed. That’s why I support the motion that’s on the floor today. It sheds the light of day on this issue. It’s an issue that I believe needs to be addressed. It goes a long way to showing how serious our government is, not only about balancing budgets and living within our means, but also about how we plan to protect and assist the most vulnerable members of our society. I would ask that the entire House support this motion.

1150

**Mr John O’Toole (Durham):** It’s my pleasure to speak to Mr Craiton’s motion this morning. I would say, even to the member who has just spoken, that it is a job. In fact, in our constituency office for the riding of Durham we have a full-time person, Fern Sargent, for whom I have the greatest respect. She has developed a terrific relationship with the Family Responsibility Office and with our particular case manager. It is really an extremely important relationship to try to form to make sure the court orders are executed.

I believe the ministries—it was under the Attorney General, and now it’s under community and social services—are trying to get the technology up to date, but really it comes down to a broader societal issue. As we were saying among ourselves, we’d like to see something that speaks to the issue of society and the challenges that families face today.

That doesn’t seem to be very popular, but when I look at the Family Responsibility Act, and when I look at family law generally and some of the court orders, the awards from those hearings are onerous responsibilities. I’ve spoken with Senator Anne Cools, who is kind of a noted expert in this subject area, and am very supportive of some of the actions she has put forward.

I really feel that resolving the issue of custodial and visitation rights is also part of this whole game. There’s a family breakdown, and when the family is broken down and there are children involved, certainly the hearts of all of us in this House go out to the children, not just at this time of year but at all times of the year.

I don’t see anything specific in Mr Craiton’s resolution this morning that is going to change the status quo without society putting more emphasis on family first. In families, indeed both parents have responsibilities, but in that societal unit the children should be first. I’m a parent of five children, and my wife and I have sacrificed many things so our children could have things. What we need to do is speak to strengthening the family in our community and in society broadly.

I think this is more politics than policy. I don’t see anything here that any government wouldn’t try, to make sure the Family Responsibility Office is charged with linking the payer with the recipient. When we came to

government, I can tell you, the office was in even more disarray. Quite often, people try—we’ve got interjurisdictional court orders that are now in force.

I wish you’d look at your challenge, because at the end of the day we’re all here to try to help families and children. The minister isn’t here to hear these comments, but—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member’s time has expired. Further debate?

The member for Niagara Falls has two minutes to reply.

**Mr Craiton:** First I want to acknowledge all those who have spoken from both sides. As a new member here, I do appreciate a lot of the comments and a lot of the history that I am not aware of. There have been some positive things done by the previous government, and I’m going to acknowledge that.

The motion was put forward with an intent of sincerity. For me as a new member, it was my way of trying to bring something forward that I sincerely believe in. Prior to becoming a member of provincial Parliament, as a member of city council I was receiving calls, and parents would come and see me thinking I could do something at the city level. I always said to myself that if I ever had the opportunity to take that issue forward—and I do now—that I would and in any venue that I could. If it meant bringing it forward as a motion, to me that was a good start, and I’ve started that way.

It will not be something I will let go of. It’s not something that’s done for political reasons; it’s something I believe in on a personal level. I have a number of very close friends, one in particular, who I know extremely well and talk to on a regular basis, who is going through this. Her husband is currently in the United States, so I’m aware of the difficulty she’s had to deal with in trying to get those monies from him.

The auditor’s report has 25 pages and 20 recommendations that deal with this. That tells me how significant this matter is and how important it is that our government work on it, and I make the commitment for the length of time I’m here. Hopefully, it will be a short time before we can deal with this and get working on trying to improve the system. I ask all members to support the motion I’ve put forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time allowed for private members’ public business has expired.

#### DECORUM IN CHAMBER

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** We will deal first with private member’s notice of motion number 3, by Ms Smith.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We’ll deal with this after dealing with the second item.

## FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Mr Craitor has moved private members' notice of motion number 4.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## DECORUM IN CHAMBER

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Call in the members. This will be five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1157 to 1202.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

## Ayes

Agostino, Dominic  
Amott, Ted  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Brownell, Jim  
Caplan, David  
Di Cocco, Caroline  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Klees, Frank

Levac, Dave  
Matthews, Deborah  
McNeely, Phil  
O'Toole, John  
Oraziotti, David  
Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Parsons, Ernie  
Peterson, Tim  
Phillips, Gerry  
Pupatello, Sandra

Qaadri, Shafiq  
Racco, Mario G.  
Ramal, Khalil  
Sergio, Mario  
Smith, Monique  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will stand and remaining standing until recognized by the Clerk.

## Nays

Baird, John R.  
Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles  
Bradley, James J.  
Churley, Marilyn  
Colle, Mike

Duguid, Brad  
Hampton, Howard  
Hudak, Tim  
Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martiniuk, Gerry

McMeekin, Ted  
Miller, Norm  
Peters, Steve  
Prue, Michael  
Scott, Laurie  
Sterling, Norman W.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 30; the nays are 18.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

All matters dealing with private members' public business having now been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House recessed from 1205 to 1330.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

## CANADIAN THOROUGHBRED RACING

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I rise today to pay tribute to a great Canadian athlete, not Wayne Gretzky or Lorie Kane or Beckie Scott or even Mike Weir. This athlete is unique. His name is Wando, the brilliant three-year-old chestnut colt whose patience and a powerful late kick earned him a spot in Canadian thoroughbred racing history this past August when he won the final leg of the Canadian Triple Crown. Winning the Breeders' Stakes, the Prince of Wales Stakes and the Queen's Plate, defined as the oldest thoroughbred race in North America

and the most prestigious race for Canadian-bred horses, is indeed an amazing feat.

Congratulations go to owner and breeder Gustav Schickedanz of King township, who is carrying on his proud family tradition of breeding the best of horses, a tradition that goes back for many generations. Schickedanz said of his champion horse, "He runs a beautiful race. He just gallops for home." Patrick Husbands, the jockey who rode Wando to the Triple Crown, said, "He's a great champion." Congratulations also go to Patrick Husbands and to the talented trainer, Mike Keogh.

This has been a great year for Canadian thoroughbred racing. It's an industry that employs roughly 60,000 people in this province and generates some \$1.6 billion into the economy. Congratulations to all of the men and women involved in this great industry.

GOOD CITIZENSHIP AWARDS  
FOR JUNIORS

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** Today is a great day for a number of special students from 20 Toronto schools. They are receiving the Good Citizenship Award for Juniors. These students were selected by the teachers at their respective schools for having demonstrated the following positive character traits: kindness, respect for other people's feelings, being helpful toward younger children and the elderly, and conducting themselves in a responsible fashion toward their parents, teachers and peers.

The awards were introduced in 1978 and were designed to encourage responsible citizenship among our community's youth. This year's winners represent the qualities we would all like to see in today's youth. They are the type of children who serve as wonderful role models for their peers.

The recipients for the good citizenship awards are, from St Nicholas of Bari Catholic School, Dalila Madeira and Joey Ricardo Khemraj; from St Rita Catholic School, Carolina Canto and Dwayne Roach; from St Sebastian Catholic School, Tia Marie Samaroo; from Stella Maris Catholic School, Tiago Real and Stefania Matarazzo; from Alex Muir-Gladstone, Scott Terceira and Kimberly Gaudet; from Dovercourt Public School, Elizabeth Khuu and Bernie Longange-Kingiela; and from F.H. Miller Junior School, Nirmala Ramprasad and Andy Nham.

We wish them well as they start their life's journey.

ONTARIO KOREAN BUSINESSMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I rise today about a meeting I had with members of the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. One of the men I met with was the president, Mr Jong Kyu-Huh, who said the OKBA represents 2,400 corner stores across Ontario, all of which are upset with recent tobacco tax hikes imposed by this Liberal government.



Tax hikes on cigarettes create a scary climate for store owners and their employees. My Kyu-Huh informed me that increased tobacco taxes translate into more smashed windows, more frequent armed robberies, break-ins, and female employees who do not want to work past 9 pm for fear they will become a victim. Stores are no longer being robbed for money; they're being robbed for cigarettes. The situation, according to Mr Kyu-Huh, is getting worse day by day.

The majority of us have figured out and we understand that tax cuts create jobs and fuel the economy. Mr McGuinty has ignored and continues to ignore this concept. I wonder if Mr McGuinty is going to ignore store owners and their employees who are working in fear of their lives due to Liberal tobacco tax hikes.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Increased cigarette taxes do not work, and neither will smoke-free Ontario nor requiring store owners to hide their display. I truly believe these issues have no bearing on curbing smoking habits in Ontario.

#### STUDENT POETRY CONTEST

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I am proud today to have the opportunity to talk about a group of grade 11 English class students of l'École secondaire L'Escale de Rockland.

These students took part in an open letter and poem contest called Operation Mighty Plume. As such, they wrote poems and letters to Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. A committee read all the letters and picked one that was going to be read in front of soldiers from the 30 nations serving in Afghanistan on Remembrance Day.

The poem of Mona Mreiche, a student from L'Escale in my riding, was selected, and Rockland native Corporal Peter Bowles told the L'Escale students that the poem had people in tears. Mona received a plaque and an ISAF nametag. As well, all the students who participated received certificates signed by the base commanding officer, as well as letters from the Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan.

I am proud of these outstanding and caring youth of my community and I commend them for their commitment to our forces in Afghanistan. On behalf of L'Escale students, the staff and myself, I want to wish a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to our Canadian troops overseas. God bless them all.

#### SEASON'S GREETINGS

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** At this special time of year when we as Christians celebrate the birth of our Saviour, I want to draw your attention to two events in my riding that I saw as incredible displays of the awesome power of God through nature.

On November 28, a fierce winter storm brought down trees that succumbed to the heavy wet snow load. Those fallen trees knocked out power lines as they fell across some back roads, leaving them impassable. I encountered this personally on my way home from Pembroke. Much

of my riding was also left without electricity for up to 72 hours.

Only one week later, trees that were pushed to the breaking point earlier were now covered in the most spectacular coat of hoary frost, sparkling in the morning sunlight, that I have ever seen in my entire life. The area around Killaloe literally took my breath away. Within a period of one week, we saw evidence of His power and might, followed by His wonderful beauty and kindness, leaving no doubt as to who is really in charge.

Merry Christmas to the people of my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, to the members of this Legislature and to all Ontarians.

1340

#### LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I want to take this opportunity to remind the government and also to remind people watching that it's the end of the session. We have now come through what is the first session of the new government, and I just think it's rather interesting to recap where we are at this point in this government's agenda.

I ran in a special place I call northern Ontario, where we had a Liberal platform that talked about the things that were going to happen in northern Ontario. I just want to report that many of those things that are contained within the Liberal platform are nowhere to be seen on the government's docket when it comes to Orders and Notices or any of the legislation that we dealt with.

I think, for example, of my good friend Mr Bartolucci, now the Minister of Northern Development, who in the run-up to the election said, "We have a northern platform. We're going to bring in studded tires." Rick, where are they? We're looking for studded tires; they are nowhere to be found. We haven't seen the Minister of Transportation once get up in this House and say they are ready to bring studded tires back into the province.

The four-laning of Highway 69: Remember that one? My friend and colleague the member for Nickel Belt, Madame Martel, myself and other northerners support the whole concept of moving to four lanes on Highway 69. We were supposed to have an announcement by now, and all we've got is basically that they're going to extend the highway in a couple of places and put a few bridges in. Where is the four-laning for Highway 69? It was in the campaign platform.

Then we've got the Adams mine: They were going to kill the Adams mine once and for all. It's alive, it's well, and it looks like it might go ahead. I'm just saying, oh, Lord, not another broken promise for Christmas.

#### McMASTER UNIVERSITY

**Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** Christmas came early to Hamilton yesterday. It's with extreme pleasure and pride in McMaster University's medical school and the city of Hamilton that I acknowledge the magnanimous gift of \$105 million to McMaster by

Michael G. DeGroote and his family. This is the largest single gift in Canadian history. The medical school will be renamed in his honour, another Canadian first.

Some \$64 million will be placed in an endowment fund for health care, medical research and education, and will provide a multitude of projects, one of which is \$15 million to a centre focusing on pain resulting from strokes; \$10 million will go to a centre on cancer focusing on molecular determinants; and \$10 million will go to a centre on infectious diseases. Mr Speaker, \$41 million will go toward building labs and expanding McMaster University Medical Centre.

Mr DeGroote has been a very generous contributor to McMaster in the past and is continuing his generosity toward Hamilton in an unprecedented way. His donation will positively affect Canadians and the world community for many, many years to come. On behalf of the people of Hamilton and the broader Hamilton community, we thank Mr DeGroote and his family for his contribution. McMaster University is already very good; now it is going to be the best.

#### AUTISM SERVICES

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I rise in the House to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty to keep his promise to parents of autistic children. Prior to the election, Premier McGuinty wrote to these parents and vowed to extend intensive behavioural intervention treatment to children six years and older. He described the current cut-off age as "unfair and discriminatory."

Now the Liberals are backtracking and refusing to keep this commitment. They have forgotten the promise to families and children in our province, and, most shamefully, they are avoiding the serious implications of this broken promise.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals across the way are making a habit of breaking promises. They have broken their promise on the Oak Ridges moraine. They have broken their promise on freezing hydro rates. They are now breaking their promise on balancing the budget. It appears that the McGuinty Liberals are taking particular glee in pointing fingers and blaming everyone else for the reasons why they have broken their promises. As they play the blame game, children in our province are suffering. Parents have to endure heavy legal costs to fight the government in the courts for necessary medical treatment for their children.

It appears the Liberals are more committed to creating a crisis than they are to keeping their commitment to the families of autistic children.

On behalf of these families, I call on the Liberal backbenchers, members who are from the medical profession, to tell Premier McGuinty to do the right thing and keep his promise to the families of this province.

#### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland):** I rise today to say that I'm really surprised that the NDP supported

private schools. During the campaign, the candidate running for that party—we sat next to each other and it's one of the things we agreed on. A month ago, the NDP were asked to choose between private schools and public schools, and they supported private schools. On the second reading they were asked the same question, private schools or public schools, and they chose private schools. In the committee they were asked the same question and the same result, they supported private schools. Last night was their last chance. They were asked again, and they voted for private schools.

Our public schools desperately need funding after years of Tory mismanagement. Already the McGuinty government has put \$112 million into improving literacy among our most vulnerable. When we moved to cancel the private school tax credit, where was the NDP? How can we take anything the NDP says seriously? We on this side of the House have always been against taking money away from public schools, and we are cancelling the private school tax credit for a good reason: We think the money will be better invested in public schools. I thought the NDP would vote in favour of Bill 2, but sadly, the NDP failed and they supported private education.

#### VISITORS

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure everybody here would like to know that my mother, Myrtis Churley, who hails from Bay de Verde, Newfoundland, is with us in the gallery today.

*Interjection.*

**Ms Churley:** She's better behaved than I am, no doubt about it.

I also want to take this opportunity to introduce Chuck and Robin Konkell, the parents of the wonderful Laura Konkell, who is the page from my riding. They're in the gallery with us today as well.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** In my short reign, that's the best point of order I've heard since I've been here.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wanted to say that most of us thought that Ms Churley's mother was actually her sister.

**The Speaker:** Member for Timmins-James Bay, is it on a point of order?

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On my point of order—but first of all, we know who's running for leadership around here, sucking up.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to clarify for the members of the assembly this is Madame Churley, and this is Madame Churley-NDP who sits in the assembly; we want to be clear.

#### LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On this last day of this group of the pages' term in the House, I would just like to



acknowledge all the parents of the pages who are here, and specifically, from Don Valley West, Susan and Frank Hayes and Caroline, Katie's sister, and William and Jean Stadelman, who are here for Katie Hayes's last day.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** You have taken away some of the thunder from speech, I also wanted to extend my best wishes to the pages. This is their last day. They have complained to me that they wanted an extension of two more weeks here, and I said to them to blame it on all the members here. I just want to wish them all the best and hope that they have learned a lot.

I should tell you a little confession. I asked them for a grading of the members. It's still in the envelope; I haven't told anyone yet. I want to thank you so much for the work you've done and for your contribution here. All members acknowledge it.

1350

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### TRUST BENEFICIARIES' LIABILITY ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BÉNÉFICIAIRES D'UNE FIDUCIE

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act respecting the liability of beneficiaries of a trust / Projet de loi 35, Loi concernant la responsabilité des bénéficiaires d'une fiducie.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** This limits liability for the beneficiaries of a trust. It was originally contained in the budget bill that died on the order paper with the calling of the election. I appreciate that the Minister of Finance has agreed to have a look at the bill, as has my colleague Michael Prue, as to whether it might see expeditious passage in the spring.

### MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 respecting the election of the head of council for The Regional Municipality of Niagara / Projet de loi 36, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités à l'égard de l'élection du président du conseil de la municipalité régionale de Niagara.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** This bill will give the taxpayers of Niagara the ability to vote for the chair of the regional government. As a strong believer in direct democracy, I'm always looking for the best ways to engage citizens in our political system. I believe that

making this position elected by the people of Niagara is an important evolution in our municipal system.

As members know, the regional chair provides leadership in key areas like policing and public health. I'd like to see that individual get a mandate from the folks of Fort Erie, Smithville or Welland, rather than simply the 30 councillors at the regional headquarters.

### EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** This bill will require Dalton McGuinty and his cabinet members to answer questions in the Legislature, and if they don't answer the questions they'll face a fine of \$500 a shot.

I appreciate this government's effort to require ministers to be here. This bill goes further. It requires them not to just be here but to answer questions on behalf of the people of Ontario.

## VISITORS

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** On a point of order, Speaker: The family of our wonderful page Gideon is here: his mom, Yoni Kwinter; his brother, Adam; and his grandmother, Rose. Of course, he is the grandson of our wonderful colleague Monte Kwinter.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** I have two bills to introduce. One I'd like to introduce is Bill Wrye, who has been acting as the executive assistant to the House Leader. He's been working very well with all members and I want to thank him for all of his support over the past few months. We're lucky to have him here.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** In the form of a bill?

**Mr Baird:** I have a second bill.

### BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Balanced Budget Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur l'équilibre budgétaire.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** This will require a balanced budget this year.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1356 to 1401.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

consent to move a motion on third party status on subcommittees without amendment or debate.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Let's settle down a bit, please.

Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I move that the third party representative on any standing committee shall become a member of the subcommittee on committee business.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Ayes**

Agostino, Dominic	Dunlop, Garfield	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Amott, Ted	Eves, Ernie	Parsons, Ernie
Arthurs, Wayne	Flaherty, Jim	Peters, Steve
Baird, John R.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peterson, Tim
Barrett, Toby	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hardeman, Ernie	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Martiniuk, Gerry	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Greg
Craiton, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Orazietti, David	Yakubski, John

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise.

**Nays**

Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Marchese, Rosario
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael

**Clerk of the House:** The ayes are 78; the nays are 6.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

**Mr Baird:** I just want to thank all the Liberal members for supporting my bill. It means a lot to me.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In a spirit of co-operation, I would move for unanimous consent for second and third reading today.

**The Speaker:** Do I have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

**MOTIONS**

**THIRD PARTY STATUS ON  
SUBCOMMITTEES**

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I believe we have unanimous

**REFERRAL OF BILL 8**

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I move that the order for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**REFERRAL OF BILL 31**

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I move that the order for second reading of Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**COMMITTEE SCHEDULE**

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I believe we have unanimous consent to move the following motion authorizing committees' work without amendment or debate.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I move that the following committees be authorized to meet during the winter adjournment in accordance with the schedule of meeting dates agreed to by the whips of the recognized parties and tabled with the Clerk of the Assembly to examine and inquire into the following matters:

The standing committee on finance and economic affairs to consider matters relating to pre-budget consultation;

The standing committee on general government to consider Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information;



The standing committee on government agencies pursuant to its terms of references as set out in standing order 106(e);

The standing committee on justice and social policy to consider Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act;

The standing committee on the Legislative Assembly pursuant to its terms of reference as set out in standing order 106(f);

The standing committee on public accounts to consider the reports of the Provincial Auditor;

And, with the agreement of the whip of each recognized party, the time allotted for consideration by the committees may be amended;

And that the committees be authorized to release their reports during the winter adjournment by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the assembly, and upon the resumption of the meetings of the House the Chairs of such committees shall bring any such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders.

1410

**The Speaker:** Mr Duncan moves that the following committees be authorized to meet during the winter adjournment in accordance with the schedule of meeting dates agreed to by the whips of the recognized parties and tabled with the Clerk of the Assembly to examine and inquire into the following matters—

**Interjection:** Dispense.

**The Speaker:** Dispense?

**Interjection:** No.

**The Speaker:** —The standing committee on finance and economic affairs to consider matters relating to pre-budget consultation;

The standing committee on general government to consider Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information;

The standing committee on government agencies pursuant to its terms of references as set out in standing order 106(e);

The standing committee on justice and social policy to consider Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act;

The standing committee on the Legislative Assembly pursuant to its terms of reference as set out in standing order 106(f);

The standing committee on public accounts to consider the reports of the Provincial Auditor;

And, with the agreement of the whip of each recognized party, the time allotted for consideration by the committees may be amended;

And that the committees be authorized to release their reports during the winter adjournment by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the assembly, and upon the resumption of the meetings of the House the Chairs of such committees shall bring any such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order—

**The Speaker:** Member for Durham, I was in the middle of actually putting the question, you know.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?  
Carried.

## ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion to adjourn the House later today without amendment or debate.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Mr Duncan has moved for unanimous consent. Agreed.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 26, 2003—and that this has been shared with all the other caucuses—when the House stands adjourned today, it shall stand adjourned until March 22, 2004.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put a motion that reads as follows:

That the House recognizes that six committees will be meeting over the spring session, three of them travelling extensively throughout the province, and that the House recognize and applaud this as a distinct change from the previous government's practices.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### SAFE DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** This government has made it very clear that we are committed to the environment and that we will implement all of O'Connor's recommendations as we develop a strong source-to-tap program to protect Ontario's drinking water. Today I am pleased to announce three further actions to keep our clean water promise to Ontarians.

First, our government is placing an immediate one-year moratorium on new or expanded water-taking permits for uses that remove water from watersheds. The moratorium covers southern Ontario and those northern Ontario watersheds that are covered by a conservation authority. A regulation has been filed today giving this

moratorium the force of law. The moratorium will be in place until December 31, 2004.

Second, I am pleased to announce that we have finalized the membership of two key water source protection committees. A 21-member implementation committee will provide advice to the government on tools and approaches in watershed-based source protection planning, and a 16-member technical experts committee will advise on threats to water, how to manage risks, the effects of water-taking and the link between groundwater protection and surface water management.

Third, I will release a white paper in February outlining a basic framework for source protection planning. The white paper will guide our public discussions and help us draft effective source water protection legislation. The moratorium on permits to take water covers water bottling and other products that remove water from watersheds. No one may apply for a new or expanded permit in identified areas while the moratorium is in effect.

The moratorium does not affect the water we need for our homes, it does not affect farmers who need water for their crops and livestock, and it does not affect any of the existing permits that allow our lives and businesses and industries to go on normally. The moratorium is designed to prevent uses that would transport millions of litres of water out of local watersheds with no consideration for the long-term effects on the environment. The McGuinty government will no longer allow the province's water to simply be given away for free.

This moratorium will provide us with time to review and improve the process for issuing permits to take water. We will not grant new permits of this kind until we are certain there is enough water in the watershed for this and future generations.

Commissioner O'Connor has said that protecting water sources is a major component of a safe drinking water system. In fact, he's made 22 recommendations on this issue, and our government will meet every one of those recommendations. Nothing is more basic to life, the quality of life, than an adequate supply of safe and clean water. The McGuinty government is committed to protecting the waters that serve as the source for our drinking water.

Today's initiatives give us an excellent opportunity to strengthen the system for issuing water-taking permits and will help us develop source protection plans for all watersheds in Ontario. The people of Ontario want to be able to trust the water that comes out of the tap. We are helping to restore that trust.

## GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

### PROGRÈS DU GOUVERNEMENT

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I rise to inform the House on the progress this government has made since it was sworn in a mere 56 days ago.

On October 2, Ontarians chose change, and change is what we have delivered. That change has been real, it has been positive, and it has been the kind of change the hard-working people of this province want, need and deserve.

Au cours de cette session, nous avons entrepris de changer la direction suivie par le gouvernement. Nous ne nous sommes pas arrêtés là.

1420

We have set Ontario on a historic new course, a course that will improve the quality of life for all Ontarians.

Let's take a look at what the previous government was doing and what our new government is doing.

They sent millions of dollars to private schools; we announced \$112 million to help public school students who are struggling to learn to read, write and do their math.

They fired water inspectors; we're hiring water inspectors.

They gave us sprawl; we've introduced changes to our planning laws that will encourage smart growth.

They closed schools; we've called for a moratorium on school closures.

They wasted millions of dollars on self-promotional government advertising; we've introduced a law, the first of its kind in Canada, to ban that waste.

Instead of helping farmers, instead of getting relief for SARS, instead of obtaining more money for health care, instead of acquiring funding for highways, they pointed fingers at Ottawa, played politics and played the blame game; we have ushered in a new era of working constructively with the federal government, and because of that I am proud to announce there is now new money for farmers, for SARS, for health care and for highways.

They were taking money out of our public schools to give seniors an irresponsible tax cut; we're keeping money in our public schools by cancelling that irresponsible tax break.

They were taking money out of our public schools to pay for a tax giveaway for private schools; we're keeping money in our public schools by cancelling that irresponsible tax break.

Ils ont mis en danger nos services publics en accordant d'autres crédits d'impôt aux grandes sociétés; nous protégeons les services publics en reprenant la dernière portion de l'allègement fiscal des sociétés.

Le vérificateur provincial nous a dit que le gouvernement provincial lui avait mis des bâtons dans les roues; nous avons présenté une loi qui lui octroie de tous nouveaux pouvoirs.

Les ministres du gouvernement précédent manquaient souvent la période de questions; nous avons présenté une loi qui exige de nos ministres d'assister régulièrement à la période de questions.

They ignored the mess at Ontario Power Generation with costs at Pickering going through the roof and income falling through the floor; we've given people the facts, we have reasserted public control and we have



moved to open up OPG and Hydro One to public scrutiny and accountability.

They didn't raise the minimum wage, ever; we're increasing the minimum wage, already.

They fired meat inspectors; we've hired meat inspectors.

They resisted setting up a public forum about what happened at Ipperwash; we've launched a public inquiry.

They used energy as a political football despite knowing the truth about Ontario's financial position; we are taking responsible action on energy pricing.

They sent university and college tuition skyrocketing; we have announced a tuition fee freeze.

They pushed privatization of our medicare system; we have introduced a law, the first of its kind in Canada, to ban pay your way to the front of the line health care.

They were for private ownership of hospitals; we've taken their P3 hospitals and turned them into publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable hospitals.

They avoided accountability in health care; we are at the leading edge in Canada with our commitment to increase public scrutiny.

They snuffed out local democracy by replacing large school boards with supervisors; we are replacing the supervisors with local democracy.

They allowed the wholesale raiding of our water supplies; as you heard just a moment ago, we are introducing a regulation to put an end to that.

They presided over skyrocketing auto insurance premiums; we've introduced a freeze on applications for new rate hikes.

They hid a \$5.6-billion deficit from the public, from the people of Ontario; we are going to work with the people of Ontario on a responsible plan for the future, one that will transform government so it is responsible to people and responsive to their needs.

I'm proud to say that we have already taken significant action to tackle the deficit that we have inherited. By cancelling the previous government's irresponsible tax measures, including those aimed at large corporations, private schools and seniors, and by increasing tobacco taxes, as we promised, we have generated savings of \$795 million in 2003-04, \$2.8 billion the following year, and \$3.7 billion in 2005-06.

On top of that, we have imposed a government-wide hiring freeze, with the only exception being public safety, and put immediate restraints on discretionary spending. Our measures to ban the waste of taxpayers' dollars on partisan, self-promotional government advertising, to curb the reliance on highly paid consultants, and to give the auditor the power to audit hospitals, school boards, universities and colleges will generate still more savings.

The actions that we have taken on the deficit and the many real positive changes that we have introduced so far are more than just a start. After eight years of mismanagement, these changes represent an historic new course for Ontario.

De ce côté de la Chambre, nous sommes très fiers de cette session. Elle marque des améliorations réelles dans la vie des gens que nous avons le privilège de servir, les habitants de l'Ontario.

But as proud as we are of the past year, we are even more eager to tackle the job ahead in the new year. On the day that I was sworn in as Premier, I talked about hope. I said it would be our mission to build a government that inspires hope in all Ontarians.

The hopes of Ontarians for their province are profound. They want a prosperous economy that offers opportunity for all, not just perks for a privileged few. They want a fair and just society where people treat each other with respect and dignity. They want public schools that develop the best citizens by teaching our children values and the best workers by equipping them to compete with the world and win. They want a health care system that is second to none and that treats no citizen as second-class. Their hopes for Ontario are intertwined with their hopes and their dreams for the children they love and the country they cherish.

Their hopes are our hopes. That's why we're going to get there together. And together is how we're going to get there: not by dictating to people but through a dialogue with them, because hope is not something that you impose, it's something you share; not by flinching from being honest about the choices we face; not by hiding the challenges or pretending they don't exist, because there's a big difference between hope and wishful thinking; not by hacking and slashing across the board, never mind the consequences. That would be mindless. Hope is thoughtful. Finally, not by simply sticking with what we know. Hope, by definition, never settles for the status quo.

We're going to succeed by working with the best partners in the world: the hard-working, caring, creative people of Ontario. Together we will be ambitious enough to choose those services that matter most of all and be the best in the world at them. Together we'll be courageous enough to admit what we can't do any more and decide to let it go. Together we'll be precise enough to target our resources where they will do the most good and honest enough to say no to those who need help the least. Together we'll be bold enough to do what we can do to help the many, never shying away because we fear the reaction of a few. We're going to take the creativity of Ontarians, their clear-eyed realism and their unbridled optimism, and we're going to transform government so it provides the important public services they need to succeed and their children need to flourish.

On October 2, Ontarians chose change: real, positive change. That is what we're delivering, and we've only just begun.

1430

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** I would just say in response to the statement made by the Premier in the House today that I believe we live in the best province in the best country in the world. I believe that we have the best health care system, bar none; the best

public education system, bar none; the best environment, bar none—not to say that none of those things cannot be made better.

That's why all 103 of us in this place come here, regardless of our political differences and our differences in philosophy, to try to make the province of Ontario a little bit better place for every Ontarian in which to live, work and bring up a family.

To respond to the blatant partisanship of the Premier today I think would give dignity to remarks which I believe don't deserve any.

### SAFE DRINKING WATER SYSTEM

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):**

Once again, it's with great interest that I respond to the Minister of the Environment's second statement during what she has anointed Green Week, in this case a one-year moratorium on water takings. I do recognize that this moratorium does not affect the water we need for our homes, it does not affect farmers, farmers who need water for not only their crops but also their livestock, and it does not affect any of the existing permits that allow our homes and our businesses to continue on.

I applaud the new environment minister for trying and I would hope the member from St Catharines would agree with that. I applaud the minister for launching Green Week, for trying to establish herself as a strong voice on behalf of the environment.

Unfortunately, this is all we see—it is a try—as far as a muster during what has been called Green Week. Essentially, it's not an awful lot to write home about. It seems to be competing with democratic renewal week and it's competing with economic statement week. The minister is competing with her seatmate in municipal affairs for the environmental agenda.

What do we have here during Green Week? What can we as MPPs take into the schools to talk about? There is a focus, I grant you that. We can go into the schools, we can talk about this moratorium. We can go into the schools and we can talk about 25 water inspectors hired, the announcement from the minister at the beginning of the week. Perhaps the 25 inspectors could go into the schools during this Green Week.

I will point out that during Green Week there has been no mention of air pollution. Maybe that's convenient. We're going into the wintertime; there's not necessarily the public concern about smog right now. So I suggest there's a bit of a cynical approach by ignoring air pollution during Green Week.

A member nearby has asked me, "Where is the mention of landfills or land deposits of waste or waste diversion?" There's no mention of this during the Minister of the Environment's Green Week. We will wait until next December for the next Green Week to find out those issues.

Many people are questioning why you would launch Green Week in the middle of December. I look out over Queen's Park. It was very white on Monday; we may want to call it White Week. Then we had rain on

Tuesday; things turned very brown. Perhaps it's a recognition of approaching global warming that our Minister of the Environment has identified the middle of December as Green Week.

They seem to be a little leery or perhaps scared to admit to the people of Ontario that they have no plan for the protection of the environment, other than the mention of Green Week. I wonder how much interest there is across the province of Ontario with respect to this week, Green Week. Are people actually doing anything, and is this government actually doing anything, to live up to the expectation that people have that this is an environmentally friendly government?

### GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I, too, received a copy of the Premier's statement, but I believe I received an earlier version of it. The version that I received goes like this:

Promise to protect the Oak Ridges moraine from development: promise broken. Promise to cap hydro rates until 2006: promise broken. More money for health care, hire 8,000 nurses: promise broken. More money for schools, cap class sizes: promise broken. Stop P3 private hospitals: promise broken. Respecting democracy and MPPs: promise broken. Stopping the Adams mine: promise broken. Freezing and rolling back auto insurance rates: promise broken. Two cents of the gas tax to cities and municipalities: promise broken. Keeping hydro in public hands: promise broken. Ensure that autistic children receive the treatment they deserve: promise broken. Reduce the tolls at Highway 407: promise broken. Public inquiry into tainted meat: promise broken.

Then there were some lines that were scribbled out, and I think I should refer to those too: "Introduce legislation to control urban sprawl," but then it has, in brackets, "with loopholes large enough you could drive a convoy of Mack trucks through."

Then it says, "A moratorium on school closures," but, in brackets, "Give them no new money so they can keep the school open."

Then it says, "Ban government partisan advertising," but there's a bracket that says, "There's no penalty in the legislation," so if the government does it, there's no penalty. There's another loophole that says, "But if it's broadcast from Buffalo or Detroit," or one of those places, you can see the new Premier saying very much the same things that Mike Harris used to say on those television channels.

Then there's another one: "The Provincial Auditor will get much more responsibility," but no staff or money to do the job with.

Then there's: "Introduce the law to require ministers to consistently attend question period," with a loophole so large that the legislation is completely useless.

Then there's this reference to keeping hydro in public hands, but what we see is a continuation of the Conservative deregulation and privatization of hydro, which is the real disaster.



*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. Stop the clock for a minute, please.

OK, go ahead now, member from Kenora-Rainy River.

**Mr Hampton:** Then we heard from the colleges and universities, which said, "Now the tuition fees are frozen, but the government isn't giving us any additional money. What do we do?"

Then there is the note on P3 hospitals, which says, "If you take the words 'lease-purchase,'" which are in the Conservative definition of P3 hospitals, "and you stroke them out and you substitute 'mortgage,' in the Liberal dictionary that means it's no longer a P3 hospital."

The media are already starting to tune in on this. The media is starting to refer to the Fiberal Premier, the Pinocchio Premier and the broken promise Premier.

**The Speaker:** The member for Kenora-Rainy River knows he has mentioned unparliamentary words. Would you mind withdrawing them.

**Mr Hampton:** I withdraw.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I just want to quickly comment on the so-called source protection introduced today. I don't have time to point out all the holes, but the big one is that there's no moratorium on taking water out of the Adams mine. That's still allowed in this legislation. It does not apply to water taken from pits and quarries. That means 26 million litres a day could be drained from the mine for a year, and then 8.6 million a day for the following years. You know what happens if you don't stop that permit? You won't be able to adequately test the water in the mine to see if putting garbage there would be safe or not. We were expecting a moratorium and that permit to be pulled today. What happened?

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** To the Premier: Would you please itemize exactly all the actions your government has taken to date to get rid of \$2 billion worth of a deficit for this year, which you said you could easily do in your campaign document?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I would be pleased to respond to the Leader of the Opposition and outline some of the measures we've taken in Bill 2 and others. I'm disappointed to report once again that we did not gain the support of the Leader of the Opposition or the members of his party when we took that aggressive step so early on. As a result of our legislated tax actions, in this particular year we're generating \$882 million in savings; in 2004-05, \$3.2 billion in savings; and in 2005-06, \$3.831 billion in additional savings. We have moved quickly; we have moved aggressively. My only dis-

appointment is that we did not have the support of the members opposite.

**Mr Eves:** We're not talking about 2004-05. You said several times during the course of the provincial election campaign, you have said it since then and you said it in your campaign document printed many months ago, that in this fiscal year you could deal with a \$2-billion deficit and still have \$1 billion left over. You said as recently as September 20 on Global's Focus Ontario, "We've got a fully costed four-year plan. It's independently verified and certified. The commitment that I have made is that upon forming the government, we will establish an action plan complete with start date and end date."

When are you going to deliver on the \$2 billion in this fiscal year, as you've said for many months now you could do, and reduce the deficit by \$2 billion?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Let me reassure the Leader of the Opposition and the people of Ontario that we will not bring the approach to this fiscal challenge that the members opposite brought when they formed the government. They cut without a plan; they spent without a plan. We've now been left with the worst of both worlds. We have a fiscal deficit of some \$5.6 billion, with another \$2 billion in additional risks, and beyond that we suffer from a public service deficit. Student achievement is not where it should be, health care waiting times are far too long, and we're having a record number of smog days in this province. They have left us with the worst of both worlds: a fiscal deficit and a service deficit. We will not bring that approach to dealing with the deficit they've left the people of Ontario.

**Mr Eves:** "Ontarians don't need more talk. They know what Dalton McGuinty promised—better health care, better schools, a cleaner, safer environment and stronger, healthier communities. He pledged to lead them to his promised land. Now is the time for him to lead, not to take another opinion poll. Ontarians elected this government to solve problems, to improve public services and programs—not to waste time."

Not my words, Mr Premier; your favourite newspaper, the Toronto Star's words in their editorial today. They are saying that Ontario needs action, not talk. That is exactly what the people of this province need today. Quite frankly, the statement by the Minister of Finance yesterday was nothing but platitudes and words. There are no specific, concrete actions that your government is taking. What actions are you taking to deliver on the commitments you made during the provincial election campaign?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Let me take the opportunity to remind the Leader of the Opposition and the members of his party of some of the additional measure we've taken beyond Bill 2 itself.

We have in place a government-wide hiring freeze. We've placed restraints on discretionary spending. We've eliminated partisan, self-promotional government advertising. We've reduced wasteful spending on highly paid consultants. We've provide the Provincial Auditor

with additional powers to audit our hospitals, our schools, our universities and the like.

We are moving aggressively, but I will not do what the Leader of the Opposition is telling us to do between the lines. We will not fire water inspectors. We will not fire meat inspectors. We will not compromise the quality of life and the quality of services to which the people of this province are entitled.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** To the Premier: Over the last two weeks, on about 20 different occasions, I've asked you a very specific question, and you have on each occasion refused to give an answer.

As our leader indicated, even the Toronto Star—historic occasion today in their editorial—is challenging you to get to work. Will you today stand up in your place and, in front of everyone in this House and the people of Ontario, ask your Minister of Finance to get to work, as even the Toronto Star is challenging you to do, and do something? Do what you were elected to do, show some leadership, because, as the Star indicated, “Just imagine the outcome of the election if McGuinty and the Liberals had campaigned on that uninspiring theme” of doing nothing.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** The Minister of Finance is anxious to speak to this.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I've heard this question from the member from Oak Ridges over and over again. I don't know where he's been, but in the 56 days that this government has been in office, we have made tremendous strides in a whole host of areas, some of which the Premier outlined earlier.

I want to just put it to my friend from Oak Ridges that I understand so well why he and his party want to downplay the size of the financial circumstances we inherited, because in effect his fingerprints, the fingerprints of the Leader of the Opposition as well, who was finance minister for six years and Premier for a year and a half, are all over the mess that we inherited.

In a period of 56 days, we are setting this province on a new course, and I want to tell him that he should just stay tuned and stand by, because for us better schools, better health care and a cleaner environment are what we are going to achieve. Just stick with us, my friend.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Supplementary?  
*Interjections.*

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** It was my privilege to make the largest single payment, \$3 billion, against the public debt, that's right.

I listened carefully to the statement yesterday from the Minister of Finance, the economic outlook and fiscal review. He'll see the numbers on page 39: the economic growth predicted by the Ministry of Finance and by the minister—this is real GDP, not nominal—3.1% in 2004, 3.6% in 2005 and 3.3% in 2006. When you look at the spending projections this year, \$68.5 billion in round numbers—I'm sorry, that's actual for last year, but the

current fiscal year is \$75.153 billion. That's an increase in spending of almost 10%. They are anticipating spending money over the next several months—the people of Ontario, the families of Ontario, don't have the luxury of increasing their spending 10% a year.

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I say to the minister, what steps have you taken to control spending by all of these folks here in their ministries so that you can keep spending less than a 10% increase?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I want to thank the member for Whitby-Ajax for making the case for me. He talks about spending this year of \$75 billion. That is significantly higher than the former finance minister brought in, because after the budget was introduced in March in that auto parts place, that government increased spending by almost \$1 billion—pre-election spending in order to get elected. In addition to that, their hydro cap cost this province \$1 billion and we're coming to grips with that, but let us not hear the member for Whitby-Ajax saying, “Why is it in the last three months of the fiscal year, we haven't eliminated all of the mistakes that they made?” I just say to him, it will take us—indulge us—just slightly longer, but we'll get there.

**Mr Flaherty:** The people of Ontario will look at the spending done by this government over the course of the next several months and we'll keep a close eye on your spending as you come back in the new fiscal year.

But let's look at the big numbers. According to your own document yesterday, on the basis of the private sector consensus economic projections, Ontario can anticipate average revenue growth of about \$4.1 billion annually. Now, minister, are you telling the people of Ontario that annually going forward, you will be unable to balance the books of this province with an annual increase of \$4.1 billion?

Sometimes you can't be Santa Claus. Sometimes you've got to be a bit of a Grinch with these ministers here, but surely you can balance the budget with an annual increase of \$4.1 billion.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** This is from a member of this Parliament who was part of a government which increased spending over the past three years by \$10 billion. Now, I want you to keep that number in mind because their real target was a very different target indeed. Their mantra, what drove them, what was more important than everything else, was their tax cuts over the past eight years. They destroyed the revenue base of this province, but then, having done that, could not resist pumping the expenditures in the past two years to give us the structural deficit that we inherited and now have to cope with. Well, I'll tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax, we will not take any economic lessons from you because your pattern has almost destroyed the financial basis of this province. That's why you were defeated on October 2.

## FISCAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier, but I'll give the Minister of



Finance some advice: If he acknowledges those tax cuts were too steep, then take some of the money back.

Premier, in October Erik Peters issued his review, and he said that Ontario risks a \$5.6-billion deficit. In making his calculation, he calculated that revenues for the year would be \$67.2 billion. Yesterday, in the Minister of Finance's economic outlook, he said that revenues have dramatically improved. He said they've improved by \$2.3 billion. They're now up to \$69.5 billion. If revenues have improved by \$2.3 billion, how is it that you still claim to have a \$5.6-billion deficit?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Chair of Management Board is very anxious to speak to this.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** I think the leader of the NDP needs a briefing on the changes that the auditor has instructed for the reporting of the finances. You've got to get yourself the annual report that was published just a few weeks ago. You will find that that is the statement of the fiscal situation.

The auditor now has ordered the Ontario electrical financing authority to put their revenue and expenses in the province. That accounts for over \$2 billion, and that explains your problem. I suggest that before you ask many more questions, you get a briefing on the financial situation from the Provincial Auditor, so you can understand why there is \$2 billion more of revenue in this year's and last year's statements.

**Mr Hampton:** I want to thank the Chair of Management Board, who said to the government last spring, before they made all the promises, there was going to be a \$5-billion deficit.

I happened to read what the auditor said, and what you've done is bring in the debt interest on the stranded debt for hydro. But what you don't acknowledge in this is that as a result of raising hydro rates from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour to 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour, there's going to be significantly more revenue. In fact, those debt interest costs will very quickly be paid.

My question is simply this: It's very clear that the \$5.6-billion deficit that Erik Peters was referring to—you now have more revenue, yet you still want to claim a deficit so you can avoid keeping your election promises. Why don't you forget the accounting hocus-pocus and admit you never intended to keep those election promises and you're trying very hard now to manufacture a deficit so you can use that as an excuse not to keep the election promises?

**Hon Mr Phillips:** I think the people of Ontario expect a reasoned debate on these matters. I would just say that you really have to get hold of this. This is the annual report. It's perhaps the most important document that the auditor publishes. In it he spells out, leader of the NDP, why the Ontario electrical financing authority's revenue and expenditures are now part of our financial statements. I would just say we now find \$2.1 billion of revenue and \$2.8 billion of expenditures.

Before we have an informed debate, it is important for all members to take the time to read the financial

statements and realize there's been a fundamental change in the way the finances are reported, as ordered by the Provincial Auditor, and that took place about four weeks ago. I would just urge all members, and particularly the leader of the third party, to get up to date on that. That explains the significant increase in revenue and part—

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr Hampton:** To the Premier: I want the Premier to acknowledge that after you've raised hydro rates from 4.3 cents to 5.5 cents, and raised transmission rates, you're in fact going to get an amount of new revenue that will more than take care of those debt interest costs. The only reason those debt interest costs were dragged into the financial statement now was so you could continue to go around and say, "Oh, we've got a \$5.6-billion deficit and we can't afford to keep our promises"—promises like you were going to stop development on the Oak Ridges moraine, promises like you were going to provide municipalities with two cents a litre of the gas tax, promises like you were going to hire 8,000 new nurses. Admit it, Premier: What you've done is cook the books so you've got an excuse not to fulfill your promises.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** He's got it all wrong. I just couldn't be any more simple and straightforward than that. He's got it all wrong. We don't have to do anything when it comes to making the case about the state of the accounts of this province. The party opposite, the former government, did as much damage as any government could possibly do with respect to destroying confidence in the public accounts.

What we are doing is giving the people of Ontario the straight goods and we're going to bring a decidedly different approach to dealing with this matter. The former government artificially depressed demand for a number of years and then they took their foot off at the end. They put all kinds of money out there, and now we've been left with the worst of both worlds. We've got a fiscal deficit and we've got a public services deficit. We're going to bring a new approach to dealing with this. That's what the people of Ontario elected us to do, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

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**Mr Hampton:** Once again the Premier tries to avoid answering the question. If you had brought Hydro's debt interest costs into your budget in March next year, I'd have said fine. But I'd have also insisted that you show the effect of the hydro rate cap, and that would have cancelled out those debt interest costs. That's why you're bringing it in now and not then. You're bringing it in now because your argument that you've got a \$5.6-billion deficit doesn't hold water. You needed to find \$2 billion in added costs in a hurry so that you could continue to go out there and use this excuse. If you had waited until March, you would have had to have shown not just the debt interest costs but the new revenues from hydro rate increases.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Hampton:** Admit it. You never intended to cap school class sizes. You never intended to turn over the

two cents a litre of gas tax. You never intended to provide help for autistic children. What you're doing is cooking the books, just as the Conservatives cooked the books to avoid keeping promises that you should be keeping right now. Admit it, Premier.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** On the matter of hydro rates, the leader of the NDP knows full well that those new revenues don't begin to be generated until April 1, which is the next fiscal year. If he doesn't know that, he should surely understand that.

Secondly, you would think that if he were truly committed to ensuring that we tackle this deficit and have additional revenues that we could invest in better quality public services, this leader and this party would have supported Bill 2; and, in particular, a leader and a party that pretend to be there on behalf of public schools would surely have supported Bill 2, which says we're not going to put money into private schools and instead we're going to make that money available for public schools in Ontario.

## ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is to the Premier. Ontario taxpayers and the international bond-rating agencies are still reeling from yesterday's admission that you're breaking yet another promise. Look at the headlines in the morning papers today: "Sorbara Delays Action on Deficit." "Liberals Hint at Deficit Until 2006-07." "Deficit 'a Long-Term Problem.'" "

Before the election, you promised Ontario taxpayers that you could and you would balance the budget. Stop the charade, stop the blame game. Stand in your place and recommit you and your government to a balanced budget next year. Would you do that, Premier?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Minister of Finance, Speaker.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I read with interest much of the commentary. I want to point out to my friend that our commitment to balance the budget next year is as strong as ever. What is interesting and challenging for us is how much more difficult it will be because of your drunken spending in the last eight months of your mandate and because of the extent to which over the course of eight years—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Could you withdraw?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Let us change the word "drunken" to "excessive."

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Just withdraw.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Our work is more challenging because of the extent—

**The Speaker:** Minister of Finance, I didn't hear—

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I'm sorry. I thought I did say, "I withdraw."

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** Are we ready now?

Our work is more challenging because of the extent and the excessiveness of your government spending, particularly over the last 18 months you were in office. That does not change our commitment to get us where we have to go, and that is to a sound financial balance sheet in this province. That's where we're going.

**Mr Baird:** The minister will forgive me for reading his document yesterday, which presents a number of scenarios that they want to consult on, and he doesn't want to prejudge that consultation.

Let's look at what the Toronto Star, the largest newspaper in Ontario, says: "Just imagine the election outcome if McGuinty and the Liberals had campaigned with this uninspiring theme." It says there is a "sorrowful chorus of violins." It says, "Ontarians didn't agree with all Mike Harris did, but they liked that he followed through on promises." He didn't make excuses. It goes on to say, "Ontarians don't need more talk," they need a Premier to do what he promised.

Will you stand in your place and admit that leadership starts at the top? Before we undergo this charade of public consultations, will you commit yourself and your government to a balanced budget? Will you do that, Minister?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I'll tell my friend from Nepean-Carleton that the leadership in Ontario now is not going to replicate the leadership of the previous government. Your mantra for eight years was, "Cut taxes at any cost." Our mantra is very different: to improve the quality of public services.

The work we've been left to do is challenging. It may not be sexy and it may not be what you want in terms of where we're going. But I'll tell you, my friend, that the work we have to do will lead us to balanced budgets, will lead us to financial responsibility and, most important of all, will lead us to better schools, cleaner air and a better health care system. That's where we're going.

## QUINTE HEALTH CARE CORP

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last February, Quinte Health Care Corp received funding for the construction of a new wing at Bellwood general hospital. Our community has worked very hard to fundraise the local portion of it, and site preparation has in fact begun. I'd ask if you can confirm for the residents of Prince Edward-Hastings that your ministry continues to support this project?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm very pleased to take the question from the honourable member, who works so hard on behalf of his constituents. On this matter, I'm pleased to inform all members of the House, and especially the constituents in the member's area, that we remain committed. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the government of Ontario remain committed to the project underway in Belleville. I would just ask that



member the same thing I asked of the member from Peterborough last week on a similar question: One of the challenges we face in Ontario is cost escalation on these projects, and I encourage him, as the local member, to make sure he takes a keen interest and plays a continuing role to try to do all that can be done to make sure these projects move forward within the budgets that have been allocated.

**Mr Parsons:** Minister, as you're aware, Quinte Health Care Corp was formed some five years ago by the amalgamation of the hospitals in Picton, Belleville, Trenton and Bancroft—hospitals a hundred kilometres apart. As with any new organization, Quinte Health Care has achieved a great number of successes and encountered some challenges. Some time ago, the Prince Edward county council requested a meeting with the former Minister of Health. That never happened. I would therefore ask if you would meet with representatives from Prince Edward county council to discuss local health care issues.

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** This unique alliance of hospitals stretches over a very broad area. I've had opportunities to speak to both the member from Prince Edward and the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington about the challenges of health care. I'd be very happy, as soon as time permits—I would think in the first quarter of the new year—to have an opportunity to meet with the local representatives to discuss what we can do to make sure small communities like Picton, as an example, have the health care they need to support that community, both the local residents who are there all the time and the many thousands of people who enjoy vacationing in that area, particularly during the summer season. It would be my delight to meet with them.

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#### HIGHWAY 69

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I know that as an opposition member you advocated for the quick completion of the four-laning of Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound. What is your government's timeline for the completion of this important project?

**Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** I want to thank the member for the question. It's a very important question, it's a very timely question and it's a question I'm very proud to answer.

I want to say that our government, in its first two weeks, took more action to ensure there would be the completion of Highway 69 than the previous government did in its eight years. I want to commend our Minister of Transportation for actively working with the federal Minister of Transport to sign the SHIP agreement so we can get 50-cent dollars to ensure this project moves ahead in an expeditious time fashion. What we won't hear from our Premier and our government are commitments we're not prepared to live up to, as you did.

**Mr Miller:** The question was fairly specific. It was about the timeline. The SHIP agreement was signed for the section of Highway 69 south of Parry Sound that the past Premier, Premier Eves, had signed. May I remind the minister that a few short months ago you were demanding a timeline and you demanded to know the money allocated to this project. I'd like quote from your own home newspaper, The Sudbury Star: "Bartolucci's Crash 69 committee demanded the four-laning of Highway 69 south as soon as possible. The Tories promised to do it in 10 years; Bartolucci countered that wasn't good enough and demanded to see money allocated to it immediately and to see an actual timeline for the highway's completion."

How much money is allocated to the completion of the four-laning of Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound and when will the job be complete?

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** I wish he would have read the whole article because in that article they might have referred to the fact that government, the Premier who is coming in right now, went to Sudbury in November 2001 and said, "I will commit \$100 million in the next project specifically for Highway 69." The budget? It wasn't there. That Premier suggested back in 2001 that he would start the active construction from Sudbury in 2002. It didn't happen. The reality is our Premier committed—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. He was just about to answer the question.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** It doesn't mean that when I sit down you start your noise. It means that I want order, and to allow the minister to complete his answer.

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** The reality is that our Premier and our government will not commit to false promises. We will commit to action. We will ensure that it will be completed. We will inform the people that in fact the timeline will be a realistic timeline. We will not deceive the public.

#### LABOUR RELATIONS

**Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is to the Minister of Labour. For too long now, the approach to labour relations in Ontario has been confrontational and unbalanced. The approach of the former government led to widespread and visible labour unrest. Our labour climate undermined business confidence and hurt working people and employers in Sault Ste Marie and across this province. It's time for a positive approach to labour relations. Minister, when are you going to move forward with a new approach to labour issues and can you outline our government's plan?

**Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour):** I'd like to thank the honourable member from Sault Ste Marie for the question. It is a very important question. It is time for a different approach to labour relations in this province, and it has already started with the election of this government.

For the past 13 years, we've seen labour relations in this province swing from one philosophical extreme to the other, depending on the nature of the party in power. That is not good for the working people of this province, it's not good for businesses in this province and it's not good for the people of Ontario.

We are changing that approach. We are pursuing a fair and balanced approach to labour relations, and the policies we'll bring forward will be policies designed to implement a fair, balanced, positive approach to labour relations.

**Mr Oraziatti:** Minister, we do need a new approach to labour relations in the province. Strikes and disharmony have cost our economy far too much. How will we turn words into action? We must find ways to move ahead now. What have you done to bring in a new approach to labour relations?

**Hon Mr Bentley:** Once again, thank you very much.

You're right to demand immediate action, and we have already taken action on the labour relations front.

First of all, for those earning minimum wage in this province who had not received an increase for almost nine years, an increase is coming forward on February 1, 2004—the first time in nine years the minimum wage is being increased.

Second, we have already announced in the speech from the throne that we will be moving to end the 60-hour work week. We will be bringing forward legislation very soon to do just that.

Third, the approach to labour relations itself is entirely different because we're finally listening, not simply to just one side or just to the other; we're listening to both labour and employers and all the people of Ontario to design a made-in-Ontario approach to labour relations.

Finally, health and safety has finally assumed the priority it deserves in this province. It is our number one priority, and we'll be moving on that front very soon.

## MUNICIPAL TRANSIT FUNDING

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** My question is for the Premier. One of your key election promises was of not raising taxes. It seems very hollow indeed when people who ride the TTC in Toronto are going to have their rates go up by \$150 a year, starting in January. You promised two cents of the gas tax and that those two cents would start to flow to municipalities starting this year. Now the TTC chair says, "You have stolen Christmas from the TTC." My question, Mr Premier: Do these promises mean nothing to you, or are you content simply to play Grinch?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I appreciate the question and the seasonal references, but I think the people of Ontario are entitled to the facts on this matter. Here are the facts: I know there's been a lot of speculation, and that's all it has been. We have always said that the gas tax transfer would be phased in. We've always said the municipalities would have to wait until the first budget before

any money would flow. That budget has yet to be written.

**Mr Prue:** To the Premier again: We now know you will do nothing, at least for the foreseeable future, on this two-cent gas tax. We know this will cost every village, every town, every city with a transit system money which they were promised and on which many of them are relying. We know this means \$150 per person to transit riders in Toronto, those same people who often cannot afford to drive a car and who are doing wonderful things for our environment by taking the TTC. We know it's going to cost them \$150, or some might put it at \$500 for a family with a wife and two children.

My question is: If you won't keep your promises to the city and to transit riders, will you at least offer the TTC a one-time bailout of \$50 million so that fares can be kept at their current levels?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be able to provide assistance to our municipalities, effective immediately. The fact of the matter is, to do so would be irresponsible, given our financial circumstances as we have found them to be.

I can tell you this: I took a great deal of pleasure in inviting the new mayor of Toronto, Mayor Miller, into my office. I don't think any Premier in the former government ever sat down with the mayor of Toronto. We are reaching out to that mayor and other mayors representing other communities from across the province. We are determined to work together. While we each have our own share of fiscal challenges, we are bringing something to the table that's been missing for a long time: a lot of goodwill. On top of that, the federal government is also expressing a genuine interest in putting our cities on a sustainable footing. So we look forward to moving together with our cities and the federal government to strike a new partnership and ensure all of our cities and communities are on a sustainable footing.

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## VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** My question is for the Premier and it concerns double-hatter firefighters. Double-hatter firefighters typically work as full-time professional firefighters in the city and serve as volunteer firefighters in their home communities, small towns nearby. In some cases, I'm told that these firefighters are being pressured by their union leadership to quit as volunteers or face charges by a union tribunal. If they are convicted of volunteering by their union, they are at risk of being expelled from the union and losing their full-time jobs.

A few days ago, I received a letter from Fire Chief Tim Bond of the Kemptville fire department, who says he lost a volunteer firefighter due to pressure from the union, and he fears the loss of more firefighters if nothing is done to protect them. Is the Premier aware of this problem in eastern Ontario and, if so, what will he do to



protect the rights of firefighters to volunteer where they live and on their own free time?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I thank the member for his question. I know he has a very sincere interest in this issue. As he knows, municipalities are responsible for the provision of fire protection services and are required to maintain adequate and effective fire departments. We believe that volunteer firefighters are vital to the provision of fire services in many Ontario communities.

I am aware, as the member was asking, that several two-hatter fighters are being asked by their associations to resign from their volunteer positions. The ministry is committed to working with all of the stakeholders to find a fair and acceptable solution to this issue. The ministry will seek a mediated settlement. If a mediated settlement is not possible, we may need to look at putting a regulation in place.

**Mr Arnott:** I thank the Premier for that answer. In 2002, the problem was raised with me, and I addressed it by introducing Bill 30, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act. All of the major stakeholder groups, save and except the union leadership, supported my bill and the need to protect the employment rights of double-hatters. In spite of the fact that two thirds of the government caucus supported Bill 30 at third reading in a free vote one year ago, the Liberal caucus was officially opposed to the bill and it was defeated.

After the debate on Bill 30, the former government commissioned the Honourable George Adams, a highly respected and retired judge, to bring the stakeholders together for discussions and make recommendations. The Adams report recommended that the provincial government should take legal steps to protect double-hatters in certain communities and circumstances. Despite that report, the union president, Fred LeBlanc, recently told the Guelph Mercury that volunteer firefighters should be replaced by full-time professionals in communities across Ontario.

It appears that the effort to phase out volunteers is being ramped up under this government because the union believes the Liberals will turn a blind eye to this problem. Is the Premier prepared to take the legal steps outlined in the Adams report to protect these volunteer firefighters and, if not, how many more volunteer firefighters is the Premier prepared to lose on his watch because of union pressure tactics?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say again to the member opposite that the ministry is genuinely committed to working with all the stakeholders involved to find a fair solution to this matter. We're going to seek a mediated settlement.

On top of that, it's also our understanding that the fire marshal has directed fire departments to do a couple of things: first of all, determine the number of career firefighters who are withdrawing their services as part-time or volunteer firefighters and, secondly, to assess the potential impact on fire protection services at the provincial or local level. I expect the fire marshal will

report back to the minister on the information he receives from the fire services. In the meantime, the fire marshal continues to monitor the situation and the ministry itself remains committed to ensuring we can find a mediated settlement.

## HIGHWAY TOLLS

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** The question is for the Minister of Transportation. During the last election, we promised to the people of Ontario that the Highway 407 toll would be brought back to the rate stated by the Tories in 1999, that is 2% plus inflation since 1999 would be about 15%. Yet, we know that it is over 200% in some cases. Will you implement a policy so that the good people of Thornhill, Concord and Ontario will stop being ripped off by the toll rates?

**Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation):** I want to thank the member for Thornhill. I know he has a keen interest in this question. Let me start by saying that this is a bad contract. It's not in the interests of drivers and it's not in the interests of taxpayers. I want to assure the member and the people of Ontario that we are moving ahead by thoroughly reviewing this contract. We are going to look at all the options that will be presented to us and then move ahead in a fiscally responsible manner in the best interests of the public.

**Mr Racco:** In 1999, the Tories told the people of Thornhill that the province would have the ability to claw back toll revenues and impose financial penalties in some cases. In your opinion, can the financial penalties that the Tories promised be imposed, and what steps has your ministry taken to deal with the public transportation mess in the greater Toronto area that the Tories left us with?

**Hon Mr Takhar:** That's exactly what we are trying to find out. As I said earlier, our lawyers are looking at each and every clause of this contract. As soon as we can, we will move ahead in a fiscally responsible manner and will take all the appropriate actions to protect the public and the interests of the taxpayers.

## AGRICULTURAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Last week in this House, you announced that you signed the implementation agreement for the agriculture policy framework. As you and I both know, and I expect most members of this House know, there was a great concern by our agriculture community of what was in that agreement. The only reason they were somewhat supportive of having it signed was because of the challenges that the federal government put forward and said, "If you don't sign, you will not get any of the transitional payments," which they were waiting for and were to have received already.

Some of the changes made were very important to them. Now they understand—I was at a meeting last

week—that they got a lot of warm hugs but absolutely no commitment to make any of those changes. In fact, what you signed was the original agreement with an understanding that both parties, one who has since resigned, were willing to discuss the changes that Ontarians want. Would tell us whether the negative option provision that the farmers wanted could be, or is presently, in the agreement, or is it going to be negotiated that we can get it in the agreement?

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** We made substantial progress with this agreement. We advanced it much further than the previous government had. We worked very closely with agriculture commodity council. We were able to negotiate a one-year review with this agreement. We were able to negotiate into this agreement the area of negative margins. We were able to negotiate into this agreement a lower producer deposit. We were able to negotiate a commitment to continue on with the companion programs for another three years. During that three-year time period, we will have an opportunity for review. And that's what the former minister is getting at. He's looking for that commitment. We are committed to continuing on with the companion programs. We are committed to the transition funding that was proposed in this. This is a good deal for Ontario farmers.

**Mr Hardeman:** I appreciate the fact that there is opportunity for further negotiations but no further commitments for the farmers in the province. Particularly with the change on the other side of table, it's going to be very difficult to suggest that the farmers will receive the changes they need.

But I do want to thank the minister. He attended a meeting in Tillsonburg the other night with 1,700 tobacco growers to talk about the Liberal taxation policy on tobacco and what it would do to the industry. The minister defended the tax increases and promised transitional money for the tobacco farmers. Is the transitional program that you said the provincial Liberals were going to provide a part of the agriculture framework, and will that automatically include the 60-cent federal dollars in that program, or will it not be able to be added to the agriculture policy framework?

1530

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** I'm not sure the question is fully in order, but I'm very pleased to answer it. We were very clear when we campaigned in the election, and I was pleased to stand before 1,700 tobacco farmers and give them the straight goods. It may not have been a message they wanted to hear, but this is a message we campaigned on. We were very clear when we campaigned: We talked about a \$10 increase on a carton of cigarettes.

Unlike the previous government, we were prepared to come to the table and be straight-up with tobacco farmers. We said, "We are prepared to create a \$50-million transition fund." That transition fund, which has been created, is something we can take to the table. Right now, there's the federal round table. Negotiations are

taking place between the federal and provincial governments. The \$50-million transition fund that we allocated, which is not part of the APF, is dollars that are coming from tobacco tax revenues. Those dollars are going to help us work with the farmers those five tobacco-growing regions to make sure there's a smooth transition not only for growers but for communities as well.

#### FOUR COUNTIES HOSPITAL

**Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many of my constituents are concerned about the future of Four Counties hospital. It's a rural hospital in the village of Newbury, which is halfway between London and Chatham. In 1999, Four Counties entered into a partnership agreement with Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital to form the Middlesex Hospital Alliance. Since that time, the two hospitals have worked very hard to create the kind of partnership that is a model for the health care system.

Unfortunately, changes in governance and the types of services that are available at Four Counties have become a contentious issue. In August 2002, the local hospital board resigned and was replaced by a ministry-appointed supervisor. In addition to that, the hospital has experienced a deficit of over one half million dollars this year.

**The Speaker:** Question.

**Mrs Van Bommel:** As a result, people are concerned that the ultimate goal of the Ministry of Health is to close Four Counties hospital. Can you confirm that there are no plans to close Four Counties and that this hospital will continue to serve its community?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'd like to thank the member for the question, and note her extraordinary knowledge on this file. I want to alleviate any concerns that exist in the local community in Newbury with respect to the Four Counties hospital. The government of Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care remain committed to the delivery of health services at that hospital, and further committed to working with the member and the local hospital to make sure the alliance, which is an important part of improved health care delivery in southwestern Ontario, remains and is strengthened.

**Mrs Van Bommel:** I want thank you very much for your assurances that the hospital will not close and that the ties with Strathroy Middlesex hospital will not be severed.

One of the goals of the rural and northern health care framework is to link small rural hospitals with larger academic hospitals, such as London Health Sciences Centre, so we can provide more comprehensive care to all our rural residents. With Four Counties Health Services in mind, I ask for your commitment to ensure a sustainable process, so we can keep rural and northern hospitals open.



**Hon Mr Smitherman:** Shortly after being appointed Minister of Health, I had the opportunity to spend quite some time in southwestern Ontario. I was enormously impressed with the networks—informal and formal alliances—that have emerged there. I think they are a model for moving forward, in terms of delivering care in a way that makes sense. We believe that care needs to be provided when people need it and as close to home as possible, recognizing at the same time that some more sophisticated procedures are better provided in large volumes in big academic teaching centres, like the extraordinarily good work that goes on at London Health Sciences.

I commit to the member to continue to work, as I have with the Ontario Hospital Association and partners, alliances and clusters of hospitals, to ensure that we are providing the best quality of care in local communities and make sure that where more intensive treatment is required, it's provided in a timely and high-quality way. I believe southwestern Ontario and a lot of the good work that has been done there is a model for other parts of the province.

#### SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Yes, you, Mr Bartolucci. Minister, prior to the provincial election, you said, "Ernie Eves was morally bankrupt for not paying 85% of the construction costs for the new Sudbury Regional Hospital." When can we expect your announcement to increase the provincial share to 85% of the construction costs?

**Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** One might suggest that one's past can come to haunt him, but I do not apologize for advocating for quality health care in my community. I have been committed to quality health care in my community since I first ran in 1978 for municipal council. I was committed in 1990 to that quality health care, and in 1995 and 1999 and 2003. The only difference over all that time span is that finally we have a Premier and a government who are committed to quality health care, not only in Sudbury, not only in northern Ontario, but across Ontario. I'm proud of that.

**Mr Bisson:** Wow, what an answer. Minister, it was clear prior to the election: You said 85%. At this point, from what I hear of your answer, you are saying never. So come clean. Is this yet another broken election promise by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to the people of northern Ontario?

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** The reality is, this Premier and this government will not cut hospital beds, as the NDP government did—8,000, I believe, during their mandate.

Our government is committed to a northern Ontario medical school that will increase enrolment so that there will be physicians across northern Ontario, not like the previous NDP government, which cut spaces to health care, to medical school.

I am proud of what will happen over the course of our mandate, because our government is committed to quality health care. We ran on it and we will live up to those commitments.

#### LAKERIDGE HEALTH CORP PROJECT

**Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa):** My question is to the Minister of Health, but before I get to that I'd like to say that Christmas and the holidays is a time of family and caring and I would ask all members to reflect on that and wish you all the best of the season.

Minister, there have been a lot of hard-working individuals, such as Chuck Powers and Don Blight, in the riding who have been working very hard on the Lakeridge redevelopment in the cancer centre in Oshawa. Can you give us an update as to the winterizing process for that site?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm pleased to assist with respect to Lakeridge Health Corp and the proposed redevelopment for Cancer Care Ontario. We ran into some challenges there with respect to funding shortfalls and the like. My ministry officials are working with officials at the hospital in a fashion that should see progress made on the site soon. We anticipate being able to fulfill the schedule as has previously been discussed, and would offer a strong assurance to the people of his community that we're going to make sure that we work to deal with the challenges we're confronting, the additional challenges related to cost escalation, and that the project will receive the support that it needs, because the services are desperately required in that area.

**Mr Ouellette:** I know the construction process, as mentioned, is taking a considerable amount of time and many of the people working on this project want to make sure that the project is done right and correctly on behalf of the constituents of not only Oshawa, but those as far away as Peterborough and elsewhere. Minister, can you tell us when the construction process is expected to get on line and begin again?

1540

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** The information that I have is that ministry officials are meeting with Lakeridge Health on December 22. It's our expectation that, stemming from that meeting, we're going to be in a position to agree on exactly what the timetable to move forward is, expecting completion, I believe, in 2006. So I'd be happy to continue to keep the member apprised of how those discussions are going, and I would seek any further input that he has related to this important project.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** My question's for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Over the past few weeks, we've seen some of the horrifying effects of domestic violence, some of these effects even resulting in death. Ensuring the protection of victims of

violence is very important. Many children and families are suffering because their former government was soft on these crimes. I want to ask the minister what she is doing to support abused women and their children.

**Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** To the member opposite, I'm pleased to have the question, especially in light of recent events over the last several weeks. I think it's very tragic, and all of us in the House I know feel for the families that are affected, it seems every week, by issues of domestic violence.

I want to tell you that I'm proud of the Premier of Ontario, who has already visited a shelter and did that in the London area—the first time likely a Premier has done that for many years. It's important to note that our government is doing a review, not just within my ministry, but across all ministries, about the programs that we all have that involve issues around domestic violence.

My ministry spends some \$89 million funding 100 different shelters. Do we spend the right amount of money? Do we know we need more shelters for women, more beds? Do we know that it's a function of second-stage housing? These are the serious questions that we're asking, and we expect that we will have a really super report available to us at the beginning of the year.

**Mr Milloy:** Supplementary?

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Sorry, it's the end of question period.

#### SEASON'S GREETINGS

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think I speak on behalf of all members when we express our thanks and gratitude to the Clerk at this table and all the staff around the precinct as we prepare to wrap up this year—the pages who have been here we thanked earlier—and to express the season's best to all of the staff, employees and particularly the Clerk at the table at this time of year, and wish them and all of our staff around here the very best of the season.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I personally should say that too, because the Clerk and many of the support staff around here make it a little bit easier for me too, and I too want to express my appreciation for the wonderful work they have done.

#### VISITOR

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's a pleasure for me to introduce a young constituent of mine, Kristopher Knowles. He's here, and he's an inspiration to us all. He is going to do a cross-country walking tour to raise awareness for organ and tissue transplants. Kristopher is waiting for a liver transplant, and he's here with his family.

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: I would just like

to clarify a few facts. I heard the Minister of Northern Development talk today about my attending in Sudbury in November 2001 as the Premier making a commitment. Well, that would have been tough to do, seeing as how I wasn't the Premier in November 2001. I did attend to make a commitment with respect to Highway 69 in November 2002, with, I might add, the support of the then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to pay for 50% of the four-laning of Highway 69, which I believe in. I know that the member would heartily endorse that, as he would the construction of the regional hospital in Sudbury and Thunder Bay and the medical school.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish every member of the House the best of the season. Now that question period is over, perhaps we can actually show some of that respect and fellowship that we talk about so often.

#### PETITIONS

##### OTTAWA RIVER PROJECT

**Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton):** "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the residents of Fitzroy Harbour and the surrounding areas, strongly object to the proposal by the Ottawa River Project Inc to truck large power yachts through the quiet residential streets of Fitzroy Harbour;

"The Ottawa River Project projects that the maximum traffic flow will be one large power yacht trucked through the village every 20 minutes every day during the summer. We believe that such traffic will adversely affect our quality of life, the safety of our children and property values;

"Although we support the concept of the opening of the Ottawa River to navigation, we demand that the proponent find a route for the Shaw dam bypass that does not disrupt residential neighbours."

I have signed my name to that.

##### GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the previous government spent excessive amounts of taxpayers' money on partisan advertising for the supposed purpose of promoting their initiatives. This advertising took the form of direct mail flyers and pamphlets to individual homes and businesses, television commercials and radio advertisements costing the taxpayer close to half a billion dollars;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support legislation that will make this type of advertising illegal in the province of Ontario."

I have affixed my signature to this.



I have two other petitions I wish to present. Do I do that now or do we do that one at a time?

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I just want to give everybody a chance, so if you could do it another time.

### PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario, and here to receive it for me is Janine Pryce, one of our excellent pages that we have this year.

"Whereas the superintendent of the Fiscal Services Commission of Ontario unilaterally and arbitrarily ruled to reduce physiotherapy fees for motor vehicle accident victims by 30% as of November 1, 2003; and

"Whereas the previous fees for these services were negotiated in good faith with the auto insurance industry in 1996 and with no increase over the last seven years; and

"Whereas the 30% fee reduction will make it impossible to provide the necessary quality of care to motor vehicle accident victims;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To rescind the 30% reduction in physiotherapy fees for motor vehicle accident victims arbitrarily imposed by FISCO superintendent guideline number 0503 and collaborate with health care professionals to assess the objective evidence for the real reasons behind the increasing costs of auto insurance."

### HIGHWAY TOLLS

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the previous Tory government in 1999 leased the 407 toll highway for 99 years to a multi-national conglomerate;

"Whereas the taxpayers of Thornhill, Concord and all of Ontario were misled into believing that the rate of usage would only increase by 2% a year plus inflation, when the costs have increased by over 200% in some rates;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The residents of the Thornhill riding would like to ask the provincial government to take all necessary steps in order to reduce the rates at the lowest they were promised (2% a year, plus inflation) by the previous provincial government in 1999."

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas in 1997 to 2000, the previous Tory government reduced and ultimately eliminated funding

for public transportation, causing a public transportation crisis;

"Whereas last year, a study indicated a loss of \$2 billion incurred by the GTA because of traffic gridlock, as well as additional economic losses such as medical expenses and costs to the environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The residents of Thornhill riding ask the provincial government to implement, as soon as possible, a new and viable GTA transportation system, whereby the residents of Thornhill, Concorde and the GTA can have better accessibility and accommodation."

1550

### AUTISM SERVICES

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas our new Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his Liberal government made a campaign commitment to expand funding for valued therapy for autistic children; and

"Whereas the families of autistic children continue to call upon the province to extend funding to children six years and older, who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) treatment; and

"Whereas the new Premier has admitted, 'We simply don't have enough people right now with the skills to help those children under six, let alone those over the age of six'; and

"Whereas the Liberal Premier, Dalton McGuinty, described the current cut-off age as unfair and discriminatory;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to force the government to live up to its promise and extend funding to children six and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) treatment."

I affix my signature because I support it.

### IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin ... to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent, from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and

technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I affix my signature on this petition.

### PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I have a petition to deal with the deficit:

"Whereas former auditor Erik Peters, the Fraser Institute and the previous Ontario government have all projected a budgetary deficit by March 31, 2004, if no action is taken; and

"Whereas the Fraser Institute has recommended tax cuts and a reduction in unnecessary spending to deal with the projected deficit; and

"Whereas the federal Liberals have not come forward with their fair share of disaster relief for the SARS epidemic and the electrical blackout; and

"Whereas during the 2003 provincial election, Ontario Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty promised no deficit financing;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition provincial and federal Liberal governments to take the appropriate actions listed above to deal with the projected 2003-04 Ontario government deficit."

### CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

**Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the conservation authorities of Ontario play a vital role in maintaining the quality of life of Ontarians by ensuring the preservation of our natural environmental areas and protecting our water sources; and

"Whereas the funding of these conservation authorities has been cut severely in 1995 by the provincial government, impairing their ability to fulfill their mandate and increasing the pressure on them to sell their assets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to re-establish the funding of the conservation authorities of Ontario to 1995 levels, plus 4% per year for each year thereafter."

### AUTISM SERVICES

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas our new Premier Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government made a campaign commitment to expand funding for valued therapy for autistic children; and

"Whereas the families of autistic children continue to call upon the province to extend funding to children six years and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) treatment; and

"Whereas the new Premier has admitted, 'We simply don't have enough people right now with the skills to help those children under six, let alone those over the age of six'; and

"Whereas the Liberal Premier, Dalton McGuinty, described the current cut-off age as unfair and discriminatory;

"I/we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to force the government to live up to its promise and extend funding to children six and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention treatment."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

### ATTENDANCE OF CABINET MINISTERS

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I have a petition here from my constituents. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I have affixed my signature to it, or I will shortly. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous government made a mockery of the historical parliamentary tradition of question period by setting new records for unacceptable absenteeism by cabinet ministers, thus making it difficult for the people of Ontario to hold them accountable for their performance as a government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support legislation that will hold cabinet ministers accountable for missing most question periods without an acceptable reason."

I support this petition, and I affix my signature to it.

### TOBACCO TAX

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** This is titled, "We Reject Tobacco Tax Hikes.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide tobacco products behind a curtain, and create a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas government measures threaten the existence of Ontario's tobacco growing industry; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has now announced the first step in a series of tobacco tax increases;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject tobacco tax hikes, reject a smoke-free Ontario, reject the ban on tobacco displays, and provide compensation and support



for the continued existence of Ontario's tobacco growing communities."

### SOUND BARRIERS

**Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre):** I have a petition from my riding, which I'll read.

"Whereas the route of the Conestoga Parkway is through the middle of the city of Kitchener, passing by many residential areas; and

"Whereas some do not have sound barriers erected in order to ensure that people living in those areas have reasonable enjoyment of property; and

"Whereas some do not have sound barriers erected, thus exposing residents to loud noise at all times of the day and night and preventing said residents from normal enjoyment of life and property;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That a sound barrier be erected from the intersection of the Conestoga Parkway and Courtland Avenue to the intersection of the Conestoga Parkway and Trussler Road."

I hope that the government will follow up on this as soon as possible.

### TOBACCO TAX

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition signed here by a great number of my constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide tobacco products behind a curtain, and support a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas history has proven that increases in tobacco taxes cause increases in the underground trade for illegal black-market tobacco whose contents are neither regulated nor inspected; and

"Whereas forcing store owners to hide their tobacco displays unduly punishes both store owners and consumers for the transition of what remains a legal product;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject tobacco tax hikes, reject a smoke-free Ontario, reject the ban on tobacco displays, and protect the rights of consumers to purchase a legal, regulated product."

### EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario understand the Liberal government pledged to repeal the equity in education tax credit; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario were not made aware that the above pledge made by the Liberal government was to become retroactive to January 2003;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The people of Ontario are asking the government not to repeal the EETC retroactively, but instead to initiate the pledge as of July 2004. This will give the parents and/or guardians the proper amount of time and money to make the necessary arrangements for their children's education."

### NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I have a petition here signed by a number of people—I'd say, about 50 people—from the community of Timmins. It reads as follows:

"Whereas one in five children in Ontario live in poverty;

"Whereas as part of the national child tax benefit program the federal government gives as a supplement to low-income families across this country to begin to address child poverty;

"Whereas the money, up to approximately \$100 a month per child, is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life;

"Whereas in Ontario the Conservative government"—and now the Liberal government—"deducts the child benefit supplement dollar for dollar from those living on social assistance;

"Whereas this is leaving our province's neediest children without extra money they desperately need to begin to climb out of poverty;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the provincial government of Ontario stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low-income families."

1600

### WATERLOO-WELLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** My petition is to the Legislative Assembly and reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents of Waterloo-Wellington need and deserve excellent roads and highways for their safe travel; and

"Whereas good transportation links are vital to the strength of our local economy, supporting job creation through the efficient delivery of our products to the North American marketplace; and

"Whereas transit services are essential to managing the future growth of our urban communities and have a relatively minimal impact on our natural environment; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has asked all municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington to provide him with their top transportation priorities for the

next five years and beyond, all of them responded, and their recommendations form the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan; and

“Whereas Transportation Minister Frank Klees responded quickly to MPP Ted Arnott’s request for a meeting with the councillors and staff of Waterloo-Wellington’s municipalities, and listened to their recommendations; and

“Whereas the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan contains over 40 recommendations provided to MPP Ted Arnott by municipalities, and there is recurrent support for implementing the corridor study of Highway 7/8 between Kitchener and Stratford, a new four-lane Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph, assistance for Wellington county to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge, a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest, Waterloo region’s light rail transit initiative, OSTAR funding for transportation-related projects, and other projects;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the provincial government support Ted Arnott’s Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, and initiate the necessary studies and/or construction of the projects in it.”

It’s signed by a significant number of my constituents from the town of Minto.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE RATE STABILIZATION ACT, 2003

#### LOI DE 2003 SUR LA STABILISATION DES TAUX D’ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr Colle, on behalf of Mr Sorbara, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles and to provide for the review and regulation of risk classification systems and automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles / Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à geler temporairement les taux d’assurance-automobile dans les cas des voitures de tourisme et à prévoir l’examen et la réglementation des systèmes de classement des risques et des taux d’assurance-automobile les concernant.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has moved third reading of Bill 5. Mr Colle?

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** This is third reading of Bill 5, which had debate on second reading, in committee, and now we’re back. I think this complex topic of auto insurance requires as much explanation as possible. It is an immensely important issue because it affects over 8.3 million Ontarians. I’ve learned that more people pay for auto insurance than pay provincial income

tax in the province of Ontario, so it affects every pocketbook in every household in the province of Ontario. We’re not just talking about a small segment of the population; we’re talking about something that affects the economic well-being, the economy of this whole province. It is important that we take this issue seriously in a comprehensive way.

It’s an issue that is at the table of not only this Legislature, it’s also being dealt with in the Alberta Legislature, it’s being dealt with in New Brunswick, in Nova Scotia, almost in Quebec in fact. Quebec has a hybrid system of half public, half private. I’ve noticed just recently in the financial statement of the province of Quebec that they had \$300 million worth of losses for their insurance, which is, as I said, a hybrid of public and private. Some of the same pressures that are on auto insurance are seen in the United States of America, in the American states. So again, we have a multifaceted issue that cannot be corrected with one magic bullet solution.

This Bill 5 is an initial step to try to stabilize rates. It enables the superintendent of financial services under the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, a body very few people hear of. They deal with pension reform, insurance of all kinds, securities, so it’s a very important part the financial structure of this province, and it’s called FSCO. That is the critical part of Bill 5. If you look at sections 6 and 7, for the first time in the history of this province, we as the Ontario Legislature are trying to give the regulator of insurance more powers to, in essence, control the actions of the insurance companies. These powers have never been given to the regulator. Government has the role of regulating insurance. Even though insurance is essentially a private sector activity, which has literally tens of thousands of people working in it, we have the role as regulator. Through Bill 5, we’re trying to give more power to the regulator, the superintendent, in sections 6 or 7. That’s the heart of this bill.

In fact, the sections do say very explicitly that if anyone applying for approval through the Financial Services Commission of Ontario does not comply and is not forthcoming in the application, that individual or that company and its officers could be subject to a fine of up to \$200,000. It really puts teeth in the role and the powers of the regulator for the good of the eight-million-plus motorists in Ontario who have had many unprecedented increases in their premiums. I’m sure that in all our constituencies we’ve heard the examples of seniors who haven’t had an accident in 10 years, and all of a sudden their premium jumps from \$1,200 to \$3,000. We’ve heard of people who have to pay \$5,000 or \$6,000 for premiums who for years have been paying \$1,200.

This is the reality of what has happened, because auto insurance in this province is broken. It’s in a dysfunctional state. There’s no one person or group of people to blame in this. I think it’s really a combination of factors that have put auto insurance in a dysfunctional state, where the premiums are getting to be unaffordable and the public is getting to be very cynical and sceptical. They just can’t understand why premiums are going



through the roof. They can't understand what their policy is really giving them for their premium. They are, again, very anxious as they get their renewal notices.

What we've tried to do: On October 23, as part of Bill 5, again for the first time in the history of this province, Premier McGuinty issued a directive at the Ministry of Finance to institute a halt, a freeze, all new rate applications. In other words, the insurance companies have to file these rate applications in order to issue premium notices. On October 23, that was halted—no new filings as of October 23. This bill directs the superintendent to say that during this period he will not accept any filings but the filings have to be brought to him by January 23. We are expecting a reduction of 10%, on average, in those filings.

That is not easy to do, because the 10% has to come in co-operation with all the stakeholders in auto insurance, and it has to come from insurance companies primarily. There are over 100 insurance companies in Ontario, large and small. People always talk about the large companies, like Aviva or ING, but there are also the small farm mutual companies, which are not-for-profit. There are over 40 of them and there is even one company the NDP government of Saskatchewan owns: Coachman Insurance that operates out of St Catharines. So there's a vast spectrum of insurance companies. Overall, most of the insurance companies find themselves in a real financial tight spot, we'll call it, financial difficulties. They claim their costs are going up and their premiums aren't enough.

1610

One interesting thing in my research: As you know, I've been meeting with people all across Ontario, from all different walks of life, on insurance. I've also done some research in terms of seeing what they're doing in other jurisdictions. I was told to look at the California example. In California, there was Proposition 103, in which they essentially did some of the same things we're trying to do with Bill 5. Proposition 103 stabilized insurance rates in California to the point where there's been a 44% reduction in California's insurance rates. Once they were one of the highest in the States; today, as a result of intervention with Proposition 103, they have stabilized. There are some good things happening.

I want to refer to testimony—this is recent, October 22, 2003—by Douglas Heller, who is speaking on behalf of the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights. He was appearing before the committee on commerce, science and transportation in Washington. What I noticed in his presentation, which was extremely detailed—he talked about how they made improvements in California, but I think the one interesting conclusion he made was that there seems to be a very obvious trend and cycle. The cycle is this: When the investment market for bonds changes and investment income on bonds in general decreases, there seem to be reciprocal crises in insurance. He's got tables and graphs that show that over the last 20 years whenever investment income from bonds—what insurance companies do when they get your premiums is

invest them in bonds primarily, about 80% are in bonds, but interest rates, returns, have been dramatically cut in the last four or five years. That is one of the underlying financial drivers in this insurance disfunctionality. Insurance companies all over the world, especially in North America, have had a problem because their investment income has declined and their costs, on the other side, have increased.

That is not the only reason insurance costs have become dysfunctional or have gone out of whack for the ordinary person. The fact also is that health and rehabilitation costs—in other words, if you get hurt in an automobile accident, oddly enough you go into a private health care system that we have here in Ontario. You don't go to OHIP if you get hit in a car accident. You go into a private health care system and those costs have increased, as all health care costs have.

Also the tort costs, the legal costs of insurance claims have gone up. There are other factors too, which deal with what they call the tin and glass side; that is, when your car gets scratched or bumped, whatever may happen to your automobile, those costs have gone up because automobile repair costs are also getting to be very expensive. For instance, I know there is nobody here, but there are some people who drive around with very expensive luxury automobiles, and some of them have eight air bags. If your eight air bags deploy accidentally it probably costs about \$1,500 per air bag to repair. A scratch on a Jaguar is a lot more expensive than a scratch on an old 1965 Ford. There are all kinds of extra costs there, but automobile repair costs have actually been fairly reasonable.

Another factor I've learned about in my discussions in the committee hearings we've had is that there is an element of fraud, or what they call "opportunistic claimants." We had the chief legal counsel for the Toronto Transit Commission appear before the committee, and he gave a presentation where he pointed to an anecdotal example of what some people are doing, but this is not what's causing the dysfunctionality in auto insurance. I make that clear. There are many more complexities, but there is an element of opportunism there in auto insurance. These are people who try to take advantage of auto insurance for their own personal gain. They're in every aspect of life, but some of them seem to go into auto insurance. In fact, in Nova Scotia they call it the "auto lotto." Then it's referred to the superintendent of consumer advocacy in Nova Scotia.

Mr Brian Leck, the chief counsel, who deals with insurance scams at the TTC, mentioned that last year on a Sunday night there was the infamous insurance bus ride on Dawes Road in the city of Scarborough.

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** City of East York.

**Mr Colle:** City of East York. Yes, right on the edge there.

On the Dawes Road bus on a Sunday night there were 95 people. There was an accident reported, where a rented U-Haul truck hit the rear bumper of a TTC bus,



and 45 of the 90 people on the bus claimed whiplash. The TTC got a tip from an anonymous source that said, "You'd better check into that. It was really a phony accident." They did some investigation and found out that, in essence, there was just a scratch on the rear bumper of the bus, and there were five ringleaders who paid 45 people 100 bucks each to jump on the bus and claim they had an accident. One of the ringleaders charged runs a rehabilitation clinic where you go for therapy and so forth. The others were in the business of recruiting people for accident claims. There have been seven people charged and they're still before the courts, but all the claims were denied. Again, this is not typical, but it's the type of thing that does happen in insurance, and ordinary people who pay good money for auto insurance are fed up with people who try and cheat the system.

There's always some tightening up to do on fraud, because insurance is like a pool. We all put our money into it, and when some people take out money that they really don't deserve, it hurts all of us. We're looking beyond Bill 5 to maybe do some consumer information about fraud, make policies more transparent and understandable. It's very evident that the only time we ever look at our little policies is when we have to make a claim. It sits there in some file at home. Nobody really looks at it when they sign it or when it gets renewed, but automobile policies are very complex. In fact most of us, I would dare say, don't even know the name of our insurance company. I'll ask the member from Thornhill if he knows the name of his insurance company. I'm sure he can't tell me, but he may. We know very little about the policy, how it works. So this government is committed to more consumer information. We're also committed to instituting an office of a consumer advocate for auto insurance. We think that has to be in place, because the consumer is sometimes victimized by the minority of people who are unscrupulous in insurance. The consumer deserves more protection and more information. There isn't enough of that. We think we can do more for that.

The other thing we hope to do is to give the consumer the ability to understand why he or she sees the dramatic increase in his policy. I was very intrigued by what Alberta is doing, and we're looking at that too, but not in this first step with Bill 5. Our second step could be what Alberta is doing. Alberta has a very simple system. They've just instituted it because Alberta has had the same problems we've had.

1620

In Alberta they have essentially a grid that gives you discounts if you have a good driving record or surcharges if you're convicted of an offence under their Highway Traffic Act. In other words, if you have a good driving record in Alberta—it doesn't matter if you're 25 years of age or 60 years of age—you get discounted on your premium, and it goes from zero down to a 65% discount on your premium. The opposite happens if you are a bad driver. Again, a bad driver is one who is convicted under

the Highway Traffic Act or commits some Criminal Code offence. They get a surcharge on their premium. So Alberta's system is a bit different.

Here in Ontario we hear people say, "I don't know on what they base the fact that I pay \$5,000. They say it's because I live in this postal code. I've never had an accident. Just because I'm 65 years old, why are they punishing me?" People just don't know what the rules are. We're hoping, as we get through more fundamental reforms in auto insurance, to start to make the policies more understandable and transparent. We also want to try to get more competition in the market, and that's critically important.

You can't do like we used to do in the 1960s and 1970s. We'd just phone up our local broker, and they would say, "Pay 500 bucks this year." We would sign the cheque, and that would be it. You can't do that any more, folks. You have to shop around. You have to get on the Internet. There are sites that give you comparative rates. I know the member from Beaches-East York will tell you that we had somebody from the consumers' association of Ontario tell us you can save up to 65% on your premium if you go to different insurance companies—65% savings if you shop around. You can't just go to one broker; you just can't go to the same old company. You have to look and ask and see if you can get a better deal.

It doesn't mean you're always going to get a dramatic saving, but insurance is now much different and we encourage everybody to go to different suppliers. There are even companies that sell directly to people, without agents and without brokers. There are savings there, if you want. As I said, the small farm mutual companies offer very good rates. So you must compare what's available for your own good.

The other thing we, as a government, hope to get into is the whole area of safe driving. There is a program now on national television, and also in some media, called Save Your Neck. What it's trying to tell people is that when you're driving your car, you have to have your headrest in the proper position; 85% of people do not have their headrests in the proper position. I mention that because one of the big cost drivers of higher premiums in this province is injuries to the neck. The headrest—and I'm sorry I'm going to do this, Mr Speaker—has to be level with the top of your head. If it isn't level with the top of your head, it's no good. You can't have the headrest down by your shoulders—Dr Qaadri knows this. You have to have the headrest at the top of your head. The member from Willowdale and all these members probably don't know that. If we encourage people to use the headrest properly, we could save millions of dollars.

There's a lot of work to do. Bill 5 is the first step in trying to stabilize auto insurance for the good of the eight million motorists in this province who need to drive their cars. I hope you'll support this bill, and I'll share my time with other members here.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I move that we apportion the debate, to be completed by the government side by 4:45, by the



official opposition at 5:30 and by the third party at 5:50. I believe we have unanimous consent for that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona):** Is there unanimous consent? OK.

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** To my colleagues in the House, Speaker, and through you to the people of Ontario, I'd like first of all to commend the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence Mr Mike Colle, for a very thorough and cogent presentation about an issue that is really of great importance and significance to all Ontarians. As Mr Colle quite rightly pointed out, it affects essentially every resident in Ontario, with 8.3 million confirmed registered drivers.

As the representative of the great riding of Etobicoke North, I was often confronted with horror stories by consumers, by my constituents, by the residents of that riding, Etobicoke North, having lived through increase after increase under the previous regime, the previous administration.

I'd like for a moment, Speaker, with your permission, to shed some light and make some comments on a number of the issues surrounding this particular bill, Bill 5, the Auto Insurance Rate Stabilization Act: first of all, some remarks on the speed with which our government acted upon this particular initiative, as well as some focus on the consumer protection that it will afford and some of the customization that we'll be able to bring to bear in this area, in this sector. To quote for a moment the Minister of Finance, "This is about acting responsibly to protect consumers. We're going to reduce out-of-control costs and make sure those savings are passed on to consumers in the form of lower rates."

As the member from Eglinton-Lawrence mentioned, there's something on the order of about 110 auto insurance companies covering the 8.3 million motorists of Ontario who have to suffer through, endure, something like 250,000 collisions. So it's timethat some rationality, some sense, was brought to this area.

I'd like to bring to the attention of this chamber, this House, this Parliament, that on the watch of the previous regime, the previous administration, the Tory party, auto insurance rates have risen by approximately 40% in the past four years. It's very clear that both the previous Premier, Ernie Eves, and his then-Minister of Finance basically hit the snooze button when it came to this particular file.

In particular, I'd like to bring to your attention that in 2002, the fourth quarter, there was a 9.2% increase; in 2003, the first quarter, a 7.3% increase; in 2003, the second quarter, an 8.5% increase; and in 2003, the third quarter, an 8.2% increase. As I mentioned, the Conservative regime, the Tory party, did absolutely nothing to help Ontario's motorists.

With this particular bill, the Auto Insurance Rate Stabilization Act—brought forth very expeditiously, I might mention, within 15 minutes of our government taking office—auto insurance rates are frozen for a full 90 days, and they require the approval of the super-

intendent of financial services for new rates to be implemented. So it brings to bear also the regulatory capacity of this government in an area which I think has been allowed to really smoulder and degenerate. That is, of course, what we're hearing on the ground as we travel in our respective ridings.

Our government, Speaker, campaigned on the promise of freezing automobile insurance rates immediately. I'd like to bring it to your attention and to this chamber and, through you, to the people of Ontario that we acted immediately on this particular file.

As well, I would like to mention that one of the things we engaged in quite actively was a very active and deep consultation process. The MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, Mr Mike Colle, has been very active in soliciting opinions, meeting with a number of the stakeholders, insurance groups, those representing motorists and the various bureaus and agencies that are affected by this particular piece of legislation.

I would like to, for example, quote the Ontario Trial Lawyers' Association, which said, with reference to the previous Tory regime, "The Tory government failed to realize that the vast majority of auto accident victims are not frauds or malingerers, but people from all walks of life who have suffered legitimate injuries and who have a genuine desire to heal from their injuries and return to their productive lives. They have done nothing that requires them to be accountable, but simply had the misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time"—and, I may add, beyond the quotation, to be governed by a government that really did not have the interests of Ontario motorists at heart.

We will work with individuals like Mr Mark Yakabuski, not coincidentally the brother, I may add, of one of the Tory members here, but who is himself the Ontario vice-president of the Insurance Bureau of Canada. He says, "The auto insurance measures put in place by the previous government were nowhere near enough to support an average 10% reduction in premiums."

**1630**

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** Mr Speaker, on point of order: I believe the member just indicated that Mark Yakabuski is not the brother of one John Yakabuski. I want to correct the record, if that's what he said. I heard him say that. He is the brother—

**The Acting Speaker:** Perhaps the member can address that.

**Mr Qaadri:** I speak with great pride of knowing Mr Mark Yakabuski, both in a personal capacity and, as I found to my delight, he is the brother of one of the Tory MPPs, and I may add one of my own debating coaches once upon a time. So I bring that to the attention of this House.

Since we're dwelling on the remarks of the non-elected Yakabuski, I would like to repeat for the honourable member that, as he says, "The auto insurance measures put in place by the previous government were nowhere near enough to support an average 10% reduc-



tion in premiums," which is one of the lead initiatives we're bringing forth.

I would like to submit once again to this chamber and to the people of Ontario that the previous regime failed Ontario's motorists in this particular file, in this particular portfolio.

Another thing this initiative will bring forth to the motorists of Ontario, numbering some eight-million-plus strong, is that it will allow some customization, some flexibility to the auto insurance policies that the motorists of Ontario will actually sign and will affiliate themselves with. It will allow people to hold, for example, a higher property damage deductible on their policy, thus allowing them more freedom in the amount they choose to self-insure. This is another step we are very actively engaging the stakeholders in, to help lower premiums and make good on our various commitments, our staged step-wise commitments with regard to auto insurance premiums. For example, groups like seniors will not have to pay for coverage like income replacement, for which they may have little or no use.

Another thing that was brought to light by the MPP from Eglinton-Lawrence was the issue of fraud. Unfortunately, this seems to be a very rampant practice in insurance jurisdictions across North America, but in particular with regard to auto insurance. It's estimated, for example, that insurance fraud is the second-leading source of criminal profits in North America, second only to illegal drug sales. For example, something in the order of about 10 cents to 15 cents of every dollar that policyholders actually pay in fact goes for fraudulent insurance claims. This is a real tragedy, but also this is part and parcel of the extra premium, the extra load that Ontario motorists have to endure.

Another very important aspect that this initiative brings forth is the removal of what are known as the DACs, or the designated assessment centres, basically because these centres actually duplicate efforts and are extremely expensive.

There are a number of issues I've dealt with, with regard to the speed with which this government has moved on this file, the consumer protection we're bringing, the customization. To close, I will quote the Minister of Finance: "Our cost-saving reforms will result in lower rates—the relief drivers so desperately need."

**Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre):** It's with pleasure that I rise at this point to speak at third reading of Bill 5, the Automobile Insurance Rate Stabilization Act, a bill that I think demonstrates how quickly this government has moved to get a grip on some of the problem's we're facing.

Before I get into my comments on this, let me first state that this first sitting of this body has been a wonderful experience for me and I think all members of this chamber, particularly those of us who are here for the first time. I want to thank the Clerk and the legislative staff for making us feel at home here, for making us feel comfortable here. I also want to thank all my colleagues, especially those who have been here for a while, on all

sides of the House, and I mean all sides of the House. Everybody has been kind to us. Everybody has been generous to us. Everybody has provided us with guidance and advice. Even members of the opposite parties have done that. I want to tell you that, as somebody new to this institution, I really appreciate the help and assistance we've received.

As a former member of Toronto city council, I'm used to the cut and thrust of debate, much of which we've seen here, but one thing I've always admired about this place and the people in it is the fact that after the cut and thrust of the debate, and despite the disagreement on many of the issues, there really is a mutual respect, I think, that's ingrained in all of us here for each other. It may not seem like that sometimes during question period, but as soon as that's over, as soon as we walk out the door, I feel it in this place and I'm very proud to be part of the collegial atmosphere that I see and that we found here at Queen's Park.

It's in that spirit that I wish everybody on all sides of the House all the best for the Christmas season. That being said, let us get back to the cut and thrust of the debate.

In the short time that I have, I'm pleased to speak to this bill. It's a very important part of the changes we are bringing to this government, a very important part of our efforts to change the direction of the government of Ontario.

The first thing it does is that it freezes future insurance rate increases as promised. The second thing it does is that following the 90-day freeze, there will be a 10% reduction in rates as promised. The third thing it does during this freeze is that measures will be taken to enable us to contain the skyrocketing health and rehabilitation costs for minor accidents, and begin the process to deal with the small minority of opportunistic claimants who are taking advantage of the system and making all of us pay for the fact they are taking advantage of this system. Fourth, after the 10% reduction, more reforms will follow that will allow for more protection from rising premiums, including the elimination of costly designated assessment centres, including as well customized policies that will help us get those rates down even further, as we promised.

I'm pleased to rise today and speak to this bill because it starts the process toward our reaching the commitments we made in this last election. Let's face it, under the Tories the rates were skyrocketing. As well, they were not doing enough—in fact, they weren't doing anything—to get those rates down. We've seen the increases. It's been mentioned before. In the fourth quarter of 2002 they were up by 9.2%. In the first quarter of 2003 they went up by 7.3%. In the second quarter of 2003 they were up by 8.5%. In the third quarter of 2003 they were up by 8.2%. Those sound like annual increases. They were quarterly increases. It really was time for action. I'm pleased to be part of a government that has decided to take that action.

I'm looking at the clock, and I'll ask my colleague—I've got another minute here to finish up.



This bill is going to affect the lives of a number of residents in Ontario. It's going to affect the lives of seniors who have perfect driving records, who may have gotten into one minor accident and found they can no longer afford to drive. This legislation will affect the lives of those young people who aspire to drive, who are looking forward to turning 16, 17, 18, getting into a car and being able to drive and knowing they may not be able to afford to do it. In fact, their car is probably going to be worth less than their insurance. This bill is going to be important to the soccer mom who gets into an accident going a little faster than she should, or has a traffic ticket going a little faster than she should on her way to soccer practice, watching her premiums skyrocket because of one small mistake. This bill is going to have a big impact on the lives of all the people of Ontario.

I'm pleased we've moved so quickly on this, as we have on so much that the Premier outlined earlier in the day.

I'm pleased to join you in this first sitting of the Legislature and once again wish everybody a Merry Christmas and all the best in the new year.

1640

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the senior member from York West.

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** I hope you don't mean that in age or years in service, but I'll take that as a compliment.

I want to add my voice for five minutes on this important piece of legislation.

If we think for a moment that the people out there are not watching the actions of the House and watching what we do with respect to this piece of legislation, we are very seriously mistaken. I have no idea if they expect a total reversal, if you will, of eight years of inaction, let's say, where the rates have skyrocketed. But I think it's fair to say that what we are doing today is what we initiated immediately after becoming a government: taking some action. I believe it's a good start.

As we talk here today, consultations are taking place with the various stakeholders. Our Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant, Mr Colle, have been and are continuously involved in continuing the negotiations and consultations with the various stakeholders: the individual agencies, brokers, individuals and insurance companies as well.

The important thing is that we don't fall into the same mistake again and go back and do another four years or eight years of hibernation. The people of Ontario, especially the single wage earner, the seniors, the single-income people and the small business people, expect some action from this government. I believe we have initiated a good beginning.

We have to look at the entire industry. There isn't one particular issue that is going to solve and bring relief to the problem. It's the entire industry. You may say, "Is it because of the many claims?" We would be very naive if we were to think that there isn't fraud out there. There's a lot of fraud, and the industry has to deal with it. Is it a

boon for lawyers, consultants, planners, whatever? Sure it is, but they are doing their job, they are doing what they are supposed to do. We have to do our share as well. We believe we have a responsibility to the people out there to bring some relief to an industry that over many years has done practically what it wanted at will. It's about time that we do something on behalf of the people of Ontario.

For myself, I have to say, my renewal was November 9 or something like that. I was shocked when I got a 58% increase, and I said, "My goodness, we had no accidents. The car is still the same car. I am still living in the same area." But because there are other areas that cause insurance rates to keep creeping up, we have to look at the entire industry. I don't believe for one second that if you live in one particular area of the city or of Ontario, you pay more or somebody pays less. That is not the case, should not be the case.

In the legislation as it is proposed, there are some safeguards, and I hope we can push the legislation ahead so we can get to the initial stages of bringing some relief.

I can see that my time is quickly running out. I would be remiss if I didn't take advantage of the fact that hopefully today we adjourn for the holidays and join our community members and families. I hope that the spirit of the holiday season, the spirit of Christmas, will be with every member, every family member and our community at large. I hope that when we come back in the new year, we can come back renewed, with new spirit, new hope for the people in Ontario. Let's hope that all members of the House can be responsible and bring some much-needed relief in all areas to the taxpayers of Ontario. Including yourself, Speaker, my best wishes to you as well.

**Mr Klees:** I'm pleased to join this debate. I look forward to the opportunity to set the record straight on some issues and also to provide some suggestions to this government, which is moving forward. They have a majority, so regardless of how long we talk about this and regardless of what we may point out, this government will do what it will do. I can't resist, of course, pointing out that regardless of how eloquently members of the government speak to the merits of this proposed bill and speak to the fact that they have somehow met a promise here that they made on the campaign trail, the reality is that they are, in fact, falling far short of meeting that commitment. If I recall well, on the campaign trail I heard something about a 20% reduction. That was a firm commitment to the people of this province relating to this insurance issue.

There's no doubt that everyone in this province knows that there is a problem in this industry, which is, as you know, the reason that our government came forward in July 2003. We introduced our plan for real insurance rate reduction, and when I say "real insurance rate reduction," it is precisely that. We introduced a program, after extensive consultation with the industry—my former colleague Rob Sampson spent considerable time meeting with stakeholders in the industry to discuss how we can, in fact, move to a point where we can see real rate



reductions for consumers in this province and do so in the context of an industry that is an integral part of our economic structure in this province, do so without negatively affecting that industry, allowing the industry to put in place the necessary measures to effect real rate reductions and put in place some structural changes within the industry that would ensure the sustainability of those reductions. So, in July 2003, we announced some very specific regulatory changes to complement the legislation that we had introduced. Those regulatory changes allowed the industry to move forward with a streamlining of the access to treatment—for example, for common injuries such as whiplash—by introducing a pre-approved framework for treatment. It also allowed the industry to move forward with improving benefits for children suffering serious injuries. A member previously put on the record his thoughts regarding the need to ensure that people who have real injuries and are affected long-term as a result of an automobile accident—that there is a way and a means to recoup expenses for those injuries. Our regulatory changes certainly provided for that.

Those regulatory changes also restricted the use of medical examinations by insurers in order to end duplication. Part of the problem that became very evident in the course of the consultations that we did as a government was not the intent of the legislation; it was how it was being implemented. It was many of the duplications, the red tape, the administrative procedures that were being used that had somehow found their way into the system that was adding significantly to the costs of the industry.

Those regulations also prohibited unfair business practices by health care providers and paralegals. It became very clear that there was a necessity to introduce a code of conduct for paralegals, who had become, and have become over time, an integral part of the industry. We introduced those regulations.

1650

I learned today that in spite of the fact that this government indicated that they had repealed those regulations—which, by the way, as a result of their implementation, provided for specific reductions of rates to the tune of up to 15%. It was agreed to by the industry that by taking these initiatives, by implementing these measures, they would be able to, by January 15 of this coming year, actually implement specific reductions to the proposed increases. We were told that those regulations had been withdrawn.

In discussions with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, somehow, obviously, the government has failed to advise the Financial Services Commission of Ontario that those regulations had been withdrawn, because no one's told them. As of this afternoon, they're not aware of that. As a result of that, I would suggest that there's no reason why that 15% reduction can't be passed on to the consumers of this province. Clearly the regulations were still in place. The industry was working under the direction of those regulations.

I would urge this government to ensure that anyone who has been signalled that they were getting an increase

over the last couple of months would have the benefit of that reduction. I am anxious to hear back from the minister responsible as to whether or not he will take that step to ensure that consumers across this province will see that reduction on their proposed rate increases.

I want to point out one other thing here before I get into some more specifics. I referred earlier in question period today to the fact that this is a historical day in Ontario, historical in the sense that we had an editorial by the *Toronto Star* today that is headed, "Ontario Needs Action, Not Talk." I don't know if you saw this editorial, but I'm going to read into the record a reference that has specific meaning for our debate here. It says:

"While it is fair to give the Liberals until spring to table their first budget, it is also legitimate to point out that consultation is not leadership.

"Often, it can be an abrogation of responsibility that, for the Liberals, could leave them both unable and unwilling to meet their promises."

Why do I make reference to this? The fact of the matter is that this industry needs action now. The government has a responsibility to live up to its campaign promises, not just to freeze rates; their campaign promise was to reduce premiums by 20%. We're nowhere near that. Instead, what we're getting is the rhetoric that the parliamentary assistant will travel the province, will continue to consult, consult, consult. I suggest to you that this is just one more sidestep on the part of this government not to do what it said it was going to do.

The people of Ontario are starting to wake up to this rhetoric. They're starting to understand that this government has incredibly effective spin doctors, who have been able to give them a rationale for breaking every single promise that they made to the people of Ontario while they were on the campaign trail. I see members of the backbench wincing when I say that, and I would too. If I were in your shoes, I would be feeling very, very uncomfortable.

I know the member for Mississauga West, who takes his calling in this House very seriously, could be doing other things—very successful in the private sector—but he chose public service. I know for a fact that he was involved in helping to develop many of the campaign commitments and many of the campaign promises and policies, some of them very good. Unfortunately, what he was not aware of while he spent all that time working with his party colleagues and while he was campaigning was that his leader had no intention of ever keeping those promises. What he was not aware of, and what I'm sure most members of the backbench were not aware of, was the fact that the commitments that were being made could never be kept, because there is a limit to what government can spend. You can't spend more than you have.

For example, with regard to the commitment that was made to dedicate 10% of the gasoline tax to municipalities, we were asked to do that many times, and we said, "No, we as a government cannot afford that." The Liberals knew they couldn't afford it—they knew full



well—but they made the promise anyway, because it sounded good at the time, and they knew it would appeal particularly to municipal politicians across this province. They got the nod, they got the endorsement from many in the municipal sector, simply because of that one promise. What did we hear today? We heard the Premier admit, “We can’t do it. I’m sorry, but we can’t do it. And do you know what? I have no idea when we perhaps could do it, if ever.”

I believe my colleague wants to speak to this as well.

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** This one?

**Mr Klees:** Well, I just want to clarify whether you do. If you do, I’m happy to provide you with some opportunity. If he doesn’t, then I’m certainly prepared to continue.

I want to make a very quick reference to one recommendation, because I know this government is looking for some constructive advice. I have one piece of advice that goes far beyond simply the consultation that the parliamentary assistant is going to be undertaking, which is simply another delay for not meeting the promise. Here is something the Minister of Consumer and Business Services can implement immediately that will have a direct and immediate effect on automobile insurance rates in this province. It’s a private member’s bill that was passed unanimously in this House, Bill 186. Speaker, I believe you voted for it. In fact, there isn’t a member in this House who was part of the last Legislature who didn’t vote for this bill. It is now sitting, waiting for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services to simply move forward and implement it. It’s an act that directly affects car insurance in this province. I’m going to read you the purpose of this act:

“To further highway safety by promoting the proper and efficient repair of automobiles that have sustained structural or body damage.

“To protect consumers from dishonest, deceptive and fraudulent practices in the repair of such motor vehicles.

“To provide a fair marketplace for the collision repair industry and those who have an interest in it.

“To implement a regulatory framework for the collision repair industry which will provide for the certification of collision repair shops on industry standards, and decertify those collision repair shops that fail to meet those standards.

“To establish province-wide standards for quality collision repair, and a system of inspection and compliance.”

1700

I introduced this thought because there is no question that a large part of the cost of our automobile insurance relates to the specific issues that are involved in repair of automobiles that are damaged as a result of accidents. In this province, we have no standards currently for the collision repair industry. This bill, we are told by stakeholders—and we consulted on this, I say to the member opposite, over a period of some five years. We are assured that this implementation will immediately have a direct effect on lowering automobile insurance premiums

in this province. I leave that to the government to implement. We look forward to working with them to effect that implementation.

My time has run out. I know that the member from Whitby-Ajax is here and will be pleased to add his comments to this. I look forward to his advice that he can provide to this government to ensure, first of all, that their broken promise can be restored, namely, to reduce automobile insurance premiums by 20%, that they get on with doing the work rather than just, under the guise of consultation, defer and continue to break their promise. I know that he’ll have some specific advice as well regarding this legislation, and he will no doubt refer to the very specific measures that our government brought in that would result in real action in this marketplace. I look forward to his inspiring remarks.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in this debate.

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** I thank the member for Oak Ridges for the introduction. I don’t often get introduced, so it’s nice to hear in the Legislature.

Bill 5 is the bill being debated. I’m going to get to some of the specifics in the bill, but as a general concern, the government has taken the approach in the last four weeks here—and this is the last day we’re sitting until—I think the government’s coming back in March. The government has taken the approach of inaction, and that includes on this automobile insurance issue, which is an important issue for my constituents, certainly, in Whitby-Ajax and for working families all across the province of Ontario.

The big promise the Liberals made when they were seeking office was that they would hold the line on your taxes. This is from their Web site. Their leader wrote, “Ontario workers and their families already pay enough. We will hold the line on your taxes.” They then brought in Bill 2 here to increase taxes, the largest single-day tax hike in the history of the province. They said about auto insurance specifically, which is the bill we’re talking about, that they would reduce automobile insurance premiums in Ontario.

Bill 5 actually takes away the opportunity of many people in Ontario to have immediately lower automobile insurance premiums. The Eves government, the previous government, had instructed the insurers to refile in Ontario, which they did before the election date. This bill, Bill 5, prohibits the superintendent of insurance from permitting any of those insurers to proceed with rate reductions, because he will not be permitted to consider those filings that were made before the date of the election.

A number of the insurers have talked about a more expeditious system in Ontario of getting to rate reductions, premium reductions, for the people of Ontario, and that is the file-and-use system. That is, we have a system now where the insurers file with the superintendent, and then he or she proceeds to review the filings and decides what would be appropriate for that particular company.

That was done—that is, the filing was done—before the election on October 2. But none of those filings has

been approved, and the insurers are not permitted to file and use—that is, for example, file for a rate reduction and then go ahead and apply that rate reduction immediately for the benefit of their insured persons. That would be an area which I commend to the government for their consideration. They're very keen on consultation and not on action. Automobile insurance requires action in this province. As they consult over the course of the next few months, I guess, and come to some sort of recommendation stage with respect to automobile insurance, I encourage them to look, among other things, at this file-and-use concept for automobile insurers in Ontario.

There are many other problems with the bill, one of which is that it applies only to private passenger vehicles and not to commercial vehicles. There's a big problem in Ontario with motor vehicle insurance rates for commercial vehicles. It applies not only to school buses but to commercial vehicles involved in the cross-border trade with the United States. I'm sure members here have heard from their constituents—I certainly have over the course of many months now in 2003—about this cross-border trade issue that we have with companies in Ontario, many of them smaller and medium-sized companies which are the backbone of the economy in Ontario, having difficulty obtaining commercial motor vehicle insurance at a reasonable rate in Ontario so that they can conduct their business, which is an export business, which is great for the people of this province for employment and for growth here. That's another big area that is not covered by Bill 5.

There are, of course, no rate reductions in Bill 5. It merely imposes a freeze and, as I say, it prohibits the superintendent from letting any possible rate reduction happen arising out of the previous filings, based on those filings.

There is a delay, as I say, in available rate reductions and overall, when I look at the bill, which is going to come to a vote—it is a vote that will make no difference for the people of Ontario in terms of their automobile insurance rates until the government begins to address the substantive issues.

If I may, then, Speaker, speak about these substantive issues for a while, I'll try to be as succinct as I can. Automobile insurance is relatively sophisticated in Ontario. We have had some type of no-fault insurance since I believe 1969 in this province. We were early in that in terms of North American automobile insurance coverage. As everyone knows in Ontario, it is a mandatory product in the sense that no one is permitted to operate a motor vehicle in Ontario that is uninsured.

**Mr Chudleigh:** They're not supposed to.

**Mr Flaherty:** They're not supposed to; that's right.

It seems to me that that alone is sufficient reason for it to be incumbent on government to ensure that there is a range of rates available that meet the needs and that are affordable to the consumers of Ontario. At the same time, there's an accessibility issue. The government has to ensure that there is a sufficient supply so that there is

adequate accessibility for businesses and individuals, families across the province. When they look at automobile insurance, they need to have a look at the no-fault side of it, which compensates people, regardless of fault, who are injured in motor vehicle accidents, the idea there being that there should be a certain basic level of benefit available to someone injured in a motor vehicle accident regardless of fault, which was a controversial issue at one time. Over time there has been reform in that area, which is section B in the policy. There has been substantial reform increasing the benefits available on the no-fault side.

I'm going to pause there for a moment, because it is in that area that there's a great deal of controversy and difficult issues relating to charges made by persons who deliver services to people injured in motor vehicle accidents on a no-fault basis. There are many people who deliver those services. They have been permitted to charge in excess of the rates charged by them when, for example, they do workers' compensation work—victims of accidents on the job in Ontario. This is controversial and has been raised at committee hearings and I'm sure will be an important point that will be addressed by the government, that needs to be addressed by the government, as they review the costs in the system, the point being that the benefits from all of our premiums are supposed to flow in the no-fault sector to those persons who have sustained injury and who need the opportunity to have the services they need to rehabilitate themselves and recover and become gainfully employed again in Ontario.

**1710**

Lots of that money is not getting to the victims; it's being eaten up by transactional costs and caregivers. A lot of the money is also being eaten up by these designated assessment centres, which are referred to by the acronym DAC, and the plural, DACs. These were created as a place where persons would go to be assessed with respect to the personal injuries they sustained and treatment plans to be developed. They have become an industry unto themselves, arguably. They are a substantial cost associated with the development of treatment plans and, perhaps as important, a substantial delay. Delay costs money in the insurance business, particularly in the adjustment of claims.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Flaherty:** That's right. As my colleague from Halton points out, it does nothing for victims. In fact, it may be a negative in terms of recovering and rehabilitating and getting on with their lives if there is substantial delay in treatment being available because somebody's assessment is the subject of delay. So those are transactional costs, assessment costs that need to be substantially reduced on the no-fault side of automobile insurance.

I talk about this because this of course affects the bottom line. When you look at all the sections of the coverage, you get to the end where you can say, "OK, we've reduced costs A, B, C and D. Therefore, the average premium to drivers in Ontario can be reduced."



That's vitally important for our lives together in the province.

On the tort side, which is section A of the standard auto policy—this is the part that compensates victims of automobile accidents who are not at fault. They're entitled to the no-fault benefits, of course, but in addition, they're entitled to the right to sue. Most of those cases, as some of the members of this Legislative Assembly would know, do not proceed to court, but actions are commenced or claims are made and they are resolved over time. They tend to be relatively serious cases. They tend to sometimes involve cognitive injury, serious physical harm.

As a civilized people, I think it is incumbent on us—and I urge this on the government—to ensure that we respect the dignity of individuals in this province when they are innocent victims of motor vehicle accidents, and their right to be fully compensated on an individual basis, having a look at their individual needs and circumstances and their futures. This is true for everyone but particularly true for children, who can have their futures altered dramatically by injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident. This is the humane, individualistic dignity of the individual aspect of motor vehicle compensation in Ontario.

The member for Oak Ridges has spoken about collision coverage, and that is an important area of the policy as well. This is the area—and it drives up costs—where we're talking about automobile repairs. The cost of repairing automobiles has gone up significantly over the course of the past number of years, particularly given the way vehicles are put together these days, with large plastic parts and so on.

There are abuses involving various participants in that sector. Steps have been taken from time to time to try to control those costs, and it's important that all of the participants in that aspect are subject, as they are, to the regulations that are in force. I urge the members opposite, when they engage in this review of automobile insurance on a serious, substantive basis over the course of the next couple of months, to have a solid look at that area. Again, in comprehensive coverage—theft and so on—that is an area involving crime and fraud that needs to be looked at very carefully by the members of the government.

I say to them that Ontario needs action, not talk. I'm sure they're not surprised to hear that from an opposition member. I was surprised to read it as the lead editorial in today's *Toronto Star*. The *Toronto Star* says, "Ontario Needs Action, Not Talk." I can't agree more with the editorial writers at the *Toronto Star*, especially the one who did the headline. I thought that was very well done: "Ontario Needs Action, Not Talk." They were talking about the big picture, about the broken promises and about this obsession with process on the other side.

There's no vision of Ontario. What they talk about is process, consultation, meetings, get-togethers. It's a wonderful thing to do; it's a grand thing to do. We all like gatherings, especially at this holiday time of the year. It's great for people to get together, but you have to have

some idea of where you're going; otherwise it's easy to get lost along the way. You need to have a direction.

Particularly on Bill 5 and automobile insurance, there is no direction. There is no picture there. There is no, "Here's where we want to get to and here's how we're going to do it." What there is, "We're going to freeze some auto rates but not others and we're going to talk to some people about it."

There has been lots of consultation on this issue. I've raised some of the important points today that have been consulted about many times. I don't blame the government for saying, "Let's go back and talk." Go back and talk one more time. You shouldn't have made the promise that you'd lower premiums. You shouldn't make promises that you can't keep. I think the government is getting that now, that they've really got to cut back on this promise-making thing, because it's making them look very bad in the eyes of people across Ontario, particularly young people who want to look up to the member for Willowdale or the member for St Paul's. They want to think well of them, after all, especially at this happy time of the year.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Flaherty:** The member for Halton is encouraging me to move on to a gathering, I believe.

I do wish to encourage the members opposite to do well in their consultation. I look forward to having an opportunity to debate a substantive bill in the new year, when I'm sure the members opposite will make an effort to come back with a sophisticated bill.

I say, in summary: This is a system of automobile reparations in Ontario that is complex, sophisticated and balanced. They must be careful on the other side to keep the balance so that the system functions properly, at the same time with reasonable controls on automobile insurance, which of course is a mandatory product.

I want to wish everyone in the House a Merry Christmas, of course, particularly the well-informed and very kind people of Whitby-Ajax who saw fit to re-elect me this year. All the best—

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** Oh, well, nobody's perfect.

**Mr Flaherty:** The member for St Paul's is not being nice to the people of Whitby-Ajax. He's doubting the wisdom of their decision. I'm sure he doesn't mean that, because this is the holiday season and he wants to be cheery about it, so I'll let that pass.

All the best to the members of the House and to you, Speaker. Have a wonderful holiday.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's indeed a distinct pleasure to follow the member from Whitby-Ajax, who as Minister of Finance had a lot of consultations on auto insurance reform. In fact, for the record, I should make it clear to the viewers tonight that after Bill 194, I believe it was, of the NDP, the increases had been in the range of 5% to 10% annually in auto insurance. Over our terms, with Bill 59, I believe, and the subsequent Bill 198, there

was rate relief, but the rate relief got pent up and, clearly, we have Bill 5.

I'm going to talk for the very brief time I have here on Bill 5. As the opposition's point person on the hearings on Bill 5—and, by the way, those listening tonight should realize that those hearings were part of a major time allocation which restricted debate on a very substantive topic, as the member from Whitby-Ajax has outlined.

For those listening, I'm going to read just a few comments and focus on a couple of points in the very little time I have. This bill is quite small. In fact, it does not nearly address the substantive issues behind auto insurance, the least of which are the victims. I'm going to read the explanatory notes for the viewers tonight:

"The bill temporarily freezes automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles at the rates in effect on October 23, 2003"—that was the rate our government set—"and suspends the approval of applications under the Insurance Act for rate changes while the bill is in force."

What has really happened here is that the government has just stopped the rates. The government promise during the election was a 15% to 20% decrease in rates. What have they done? Nothing.

This bill—I will go through it. There is another important clause which I'm going to debate in the very limited time I have, but for those interested who really want a detailed accounting of what happened during the public hearings—which were, with all respect, a sham. They were a sham to the extent that on the day of hearings, December 15 of this week, the members of the government failed to show up and the hearings were suspended by the Chair of the committee. The finance and economic affairs committee suspended the hearings. All those deputations, from the insurance bureau, the victims, were not put on the record. As the government Liberal members—I'm not sure; I would not like to impute motive, but I believe they did not show up, and that's suspicious in my accounting of this event. But it's important to pay attention to details and not get lost in the shouting here.

1720

In this section I'm going to refer members to, "An insurer"—that's the company, the big giant corporation—"may apply to the superintendent of financial services for a rate increase if the insurer believes that it is just and reasonable in the circumstances having regard to the insurer's financial circumstances."

The companies, like ING, are broke, right? It's often referred to and has been referred to by many members on all sides of the House as the Mack truck clause. That's section 6 I'm referring to, and I'm going to read section 6 of the bill. It's important to put it on the record. Here's what it says:

"Application to charge higher rates"—you've got to read the bill. Subsection 6(1) says, "An insurer may apply to the superintendent for approval to charge rates that exceed the authorized rates if the insurer believes it

is just and reasonable in the circumstances having regard to the insurer's financial circumstances...."

All they seem to be saying here is that their biggest concern is to the insurer, the underwriter. What this does is it forces, in a very short window, the industry—these are the underwriters this risk pooling addresses—to rewrite the classifications of risk and providers of risk insurance.

Mr Flaherty, whom I have the greatest respect for, knows this industry well. He made substantive changes but he always protected the victims. When I heard him speak—

*Interjections.*

**Mr O'Toole:** These are minutes, and I can tell you he had the greatest respect for victims, specifically children, specifically people involved in catastrophic incidents. He made very brief mention of the DACs, the designated assessment centres.

My perspective on this is that I am dealing with a constituent at the moment. This person was hit a year and a half ago by an impaired driver and, to this date, they've been put through the treadmill, the maze of insurance, the DAC companies. They are at risk of losing their home; I put this on the record, it's a public record: Jacqueline Hurren. Her legal representative is trying to make sure that her needs are being addressed by having expeditious access to a timely assessment through the DACs and through a timely resolution of these issues without having to go through another accident, another battle, which is the court system itself.

I believe the members here should know that today this is third reading. They have had the mother of all time allocation bills—of all time. They had three bills all rolled into one time allocation, limiting the amount of presentations from stakeholders, from citizens of this province. They limited it, and then denied them access by not showing up at the committee. They dealt with auto insurance, they dealt with the hydro issue and they dealt with the largest tax increase in history of \$4.1 billion.

There have been a lot of shell games going on in this early term of this government. We, as opposition, are here to hold them accountable, and I am saying that this bill does not nearly come close to committing to the promises to the people, my constituents in the riding of Durham, of lowering auto insurance. For the most vulnerable in our society, it's my understanding that their intention is to eliminate access to proper assessments. They promised to cancel the DACs, these assessments, in their policy paper prior to the election, but like every other promise prior to the election, they did one thing and after the election they're doing another thing. In fact, Bill 5 is a travesty of access to justice, of access to proper and adequate insurance coverage by the Liberal government that's now sitting.

I want to conclude by saying that in all respects I really believe—I still think of Mrs Hurren. She's losing her job, potentially losing her home. I would not cite her name if I wasn't given permission. She's desperate to be properly assessed, to have her claim recognized—it was a



convicted impaired driver; that's been resolved in the courts—and she's unable to get proper resolution of her concerns. This government has done nothing for her, and I'm convinced, going forward—the victims still out there in auto insurance, both those paying premiums and those looking to have resolution to their concerns, are being denied.

They've used every excuse in the book. Today was a litany of excuses; that is what it was. To say there's a deficit or something—the *Toronto Star* said it today. They have to get on with governing. Governing is about making difficult decisions.

Out of respect for other members in our caucus who have much to say, and I look to the former Minister of Health, who has much to say on this issue, I'm willing to yield the floor. But the point has been made. This bill is nothing but a shallow promise on a very complex issue. Always keep the victims in mind. I know that was always the intent of our Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, and I know, going forward this government will always stand on the side of victims.

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** Before I begin my remarks, I want to take this opportunity, on this last day of the 2003 session, to extend my warmest wishes and season's greetings to all the members in the House. As I was driving up here this morning along University Avenue from my home in Kitchener-Waterloo, I reflected upon the fact that it was such an honour to be one of the 103 people elected in this province and to have the responsibility and the honour to represent the people in this wonderful province of Ontario. I think sometimes we forget how very fortunate we are. I know that each one of the 103 members tries their best every day to do the best job they can. It's certainly a privilege for me to work with all of you. I wish you a great holiday with your families and your friends.

I will speak briefly. I have less than two minutes to speak about Bill 5. I think we're all concerned about this piece of legislation. Regrettably, it's not going to reduce auto insurance rates in this province at all. I've certainly heard from many constituents who are at a point where they're having to reconsider whether or not they can afford to drive their car. I have one individual who has given up his car. He just could no longer afford the cost of insurance.

This bill doesn't help in that respect because there is no rate reduction. There are no provisions in this bill to reduce the costs of the industry or the rates for motorists, and it doesn't provide any sort of consumer protection. Regrettably, it also delays the available premium reductions to people in Ontario. As you know, our government had put this province in a position where insurers had filed rate reductions pursuant to the reforms we had introduced. This would have provided for a 10% rate reduction for the motorists across Ontario. However, the freeze in this bill that is being implemented by the government will actually deny people in this province the immediate 10% rate reduction we were prepared to provide for them.

Also, I would indicate that the bill doesn't cover the commercial users and the small businesses. This bill will be a hardship to businesses in Ontario. We need to remember it's the businesses that create the jobs. It's the jobs that create the revenue. We were able to see the creation of over a million jobs when we were in government. So this bill, regrettably, is going to have a detrimental impact on both individuals and businesses in the province of Ontario.

1730

**Mr Prue:** I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Niagara Centre. We have approximately 20 minutes. This bill is about auto insurance. It is about freezing the rates of excessively high automobile insurance while this government grapples with how to reduce the amount that consumers are forced to pay.

Before dealing with the bill itself, I'd just like to read out into the record what people see in their rate increases that are coming through the mail today—rate increases, I might say, that were authorized before the last election. I have here a certain bill to a Mr Michael Prue. I went to the amount of money and saw a 15% increase and immediately saw a little red. What made me even angrier was, when I looked in, not only did I get a 15% increase, this is in fact why I got a 15% increase and maybe not a 20% or 25% increase: "Automobile Insurance Has Changed."

"Step one, effective October 1, 2003, deals with fairness and immediate cost pressures."

You might remember that day. That was the day before the election. This is what the Conservatives did as they were going out—

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** They slashed benefits.

**Mr Prue:** They slashed benefits, and here's what I no longer have in my coverage for an extra 15% increase. They say they will be prohibiting "unfair business practices by health care providers and paralegals effective November 1, 2003." What that means, is the people who look after injuries—the chiropractors, the massage therapists and others in the province—can no longer do unfair business practices, whatever those were.

The second thing is that they are changing my policy so that if my car is stolen and not found, the insurance company will now subtract the deductible. So if somebody steals my car, I have to pay the deductible, and I'm an innocent victim. I obviously wouldn't have even been in the car. It would have been parked and in my driveway or something at the time that it happened. I now have to pay the deductible.

What the insurance company is going to do is introduce rules about the kinds of injuries that are entitled to compensation for pain and suffering, and how to get that compensation. These rules apply to accidents after October 1. It is now much more difficult for an innocent victim involved in a traffic accident to sue for pain and suffering. They're going to change the deductibles that apply to that pain and suffering from \$15,000 to \$30,000, and these are affective after October 1.

Last but not least, they are going to change the basic weekly income replacement benefit from \$400 to \$300 a week.

For the privilege of getting a 15% increase, I as a consumer have lost all of these benefits. That happened on October 1. What happened on October 23? Twenty-two days later, my exorbitant rate of insurance increase, with all the stuff, was frozen.

I looked with great anticipation to Bill 5 coming forward from the government. I have to tell you, what this bill did was freeze an excessively high rate with very few and limited benefits where it was. It was most instructive, given the arguments in this last couple of days about retroactivity and how the Liberal government thought it was necessary to be retroactive to all of those people who sent their children to religious-based schools and how it was perfectly justified to go back 10 months, that there is not one provision in here that is retroactive upon the insurance companies. Surely, if you wanted to be retroactive to anyone, you should have been retroactive to companies that gouge and continue to gouge the poor driving public, but there's nothing in there about that.

What there also is not in this bill is, it does not cover businesses. It does not cover cab drivers, personal deliveries and messenger services, and it does not cover transportation and trucks. So these people who have seen their rates go up exponentially in the last couple of years—we heard a horror story of one trucking company in the north, with the same fleet of trucks and with no accidents, that went from \$40,000 in 1998 to now paying over \$400,000 for the same service. It doesn't cover any of those.

When we look inside the bill, there is a Mack truck section, section 6. It does not freeze the rate but provides the criteria "to charge higher rates," and this is vested with the superintendent. So all a company has to say is, "We're not making enough money, we're in a little bit of sad financial situation, our investments haven't been good," and the superintendent can agree with them and give them whatever he thinks is fair. This is the Mack truck provision.

Now, it's absolutely clear from the deputants who appeared before us where this government intends to save the 10% after the 90-day period—it is abundantly and totally clear. Number one, they are going to further cut the services to victims. They are going to make it more difficult for victims who are involved in automobile accidents to get the service they need to recuperate. Especially in the fields of chiropody, chiropractics and massage therapy, and where psychological problems develop, they are going to make sure it is increasingly difficult.

Just as the past government did, this new government is going to embark down the same road. They are going to cut the amount of funding that is available to accident victims. They are going to further rein in the health professionals, who have seen the rates they are able to charge to give necessary medical services to accident

victims, particularly those who have soft tissue injuries, decrease by some 30%.

We are also seeing what is expected in here. We had some excellent presenters who gave us some good cost estimates of how much is going to be saved: \$275 million for medical rehabilitation, chiropractors, physiotherapists and massage therapists, and \$250 million by increasing the pain and suffering threshold. They're going to save a pittance and a few dollars on the customization of plans. But instrumentally, and what is most telling here, is that they are making no cuts whatsoever to the companies or to the brokers.

Those companies and brokers are not expected to save 10 cents. The brokers will continue to be able to charge 12.5%—that is not going to change. The companies are going to continue to be able to make whatever profit the market will bear and to choose not to insure those who, by law, need to have driving insurance, and we will see the rate of the facility policy increase. Approximately 15% to 20% of the drivers on the road today have no insurance at all, and we are only going to see an increase in that.

Now, this is all versus what would happen if this government would bite the bullet and look at public auto, look at the experience of British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and, in a marginal way, of Quebec as well. We would see exactly where money could be saved. You have a choice: You can cut the money that is paid to accident victims, you can cut the money that is available to health care professionals, you can ensure that the private insurance companies continue to reap profits of 10% to 12% and have huge and bloated bureaucracies, or you can go public.

In public insurance, you're going to save money in a different way: not on the backs of consumers, not on the backs of the injured, not on the backs of those who have been involved in automobile accidents, but simply by doing away with something I think the Conservatives on the other side of rump might find disrespectful and disgraceful, but that I put to you would be of great benefit to overall consumers, and that is getting rid of the 12% to 15% profit margin that insurance companies historically make.

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We could also save hundreds of millions of dollars annually on administrative efficiencies by having one bureaucracy within the insurance system, by having one actuary within the insurance system, by having one set of guidelines, by having one set of solvency costs.

Last but not least, we would save an enormous amount, as the Liberals keep telling us, by doing away with all the unnecessary advertising. This is an opportunity, for the government would be the sole provider. They wouldn't have to advertise. They would be the only game in town, rather than every insurance company sending me letters telling me how good they are, and the ads on television telling me how much money they can save me, when in reality, they do not.

That is why I think this bill is terribly flawed. It does nothing. For 90 days, it freezes high rates. The proof will



be in the pudding of the end of the 90 days. But I will state that the reality is, at the end of the 90 days, the consumers will still be screwed.

With that, I will turn the floor over to my colleague from Niagara Centre.

**Mr Kormos:** Speaker, you appreciate that these could be—as a matter of fact, they will be—the final comments of the year 2003. I'm pleased to have had the final word for the year '03. I will be here on January 2, if the government wants to recall this Parliament to participate in the first comments of the year '04, because I quite frankly find that three-month vacation a little bit of an embarrassment. Yikes. How these guys could be here—my gosh. They weren't here but two days, remember? Then they voted themselves a three-month vacation. Zonkers.

Look, you know what folks are saying out there on the street? You do? There's not a cabbie—the doorman over at the Sheraton Centre the other day was shaking his head, everybody is shaking their head saying, “Can you believe those guys?” Broken promises after broken promises—I was counting off the broken promises Howard Hampton was listing in the response today. I got up to 10 on my fingers. I was trying to do graphics right behind Howard. I realized, uh-oh, he's going beyond 10. I could be in big trouble here. Really, out of 231, we're talking about how many so far? We're talking about at least 20. The ratio—

**Mr Sergio:** Who's keeping count?

**Mr Kormos:** We're keeping count, brother. We're keeping count real good. Look, feel free to break your commitment to private auto insurance. At this point, you've broken enough promises. Nobody's going to chastise you for breaking your promise to the private, for-profit auto insurance industry, the one that you're sitting in the lap of. It's like that old Victrola, the old RCA-Victor logo, “His Master's Voice,” right?

**Mr Hampton:** You could break this one and people won't even notice.

**Mr Kormos:** That's right. There's the Liberal government of Ontario and his master's voice. You're sure to see Mark Yakabuski calling the shots once again. You heard what happened. The Tories reduced benefits secretly by regulation. They slashed benefits. Mr Prue told you about those. The industry says, “But you've got to do more. You've got to give us more. You've got to slash benefits even more, make the innocent victim pay.” That's why deductibles increased from, what, \$15,000 to \$30,000, Mr Prue? Am I right, \$15,000 to \$30,000?

**Mr Prue:** Yes.

**Mr Kormos:** That's called punishing the innocent victim. Don't you guys get it? The industry wants more and you're going to give it more. What you should be doing is giving them the door. Say, “So long.” You guys have had how many kicks at the can, and you still foul it up?

**Mr Colle:** This could be the last kick.

**Mr Kormos:** Mr Colle says, “Oh, this is the last time.” Oh, Lord, Mr Colle. Yes, stand up, get up on your

feet. It's easy for you to say, because you know you're not going to be able to get up on your feet and put that on the record.

Listen, I've seen Liberal governments, NDP governments, Tory governments, try to regulate this industry. Now I'm seeing Liberal governments with another a kick at the can. David Peterson couldn't regulate them, couldn't contain them. New Democrats, albeit with their bent for regulation, were unable to do it in the early 1990s. The Tories were unable to do it in 1995-96, and subsequently again in the second term. Trust me, Mr Colle, they're having you for dinner. They're having you with HP Sauce on the side. You've been had. You've been consumed. You're in the process of being digested, and as you travel down that alimentary canal, bid so long to your former friends; that's all I can say to you. Because you know where you're going to end up? Well, at this point, the plan ends up in the toilet with all the others.

Here I am, *au naturel*, as I told several newspaper, radio and television interviewers; I promised them I'd be up here *au naturel*. Now, some of them thought that was a reference to Doukhobor background, but I promised them, no, it simply meant *sans cravate*.

Here I am. It's Thursday afternoon, post-resolution time, and I'm proud to be standing here as the member for Niagara Centre, as a proud New Democrat whose former leader, Ed Broadbent, is in a very exciting way taking up the challenge again, going to kick some Mahoney butt up in Ottawa. We've got Dennis Mills scurrying to his hole in the ground here in Toronto; Layton's obviously geared to win over in the Danforth area, so you've got Mills scurrying, pleading, grovelling for an appointment, and you've got Richard Mahoney going, “Oh, nuts.” One journalist said to me today, “Don't you think Ed Broadbent is too old?” I said, “Are you kidding? Compared to Martin, he's a kid.” By all means, Ed Broadbent is tough, strong, well-grounded, sound, and he's got himself a new riding to win up in Ottawa. I am looking forward to that federal election.

Now, I understand why the Liberals here at Queen's Park don't want to be sitting in that period preceding that federal election, because you've already done Martin and his gang a whole lot of damage. You understand that, don't you? The broken promises and the patina, or the anti-patina, that has begun to stick to you—you have not done any favours to your federal cousins. Mind you, obviously Stephen Harper and Peter MacKay did, but you've more than offset the favour that MacKay and Harper have done for the Liberals by damaging Liberal fortunes here in this province.

This had better be a good point of order, Speaker, because he's using my time.

**Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I feel compelled to rise and defend Stephen Harper in this House. It's shameful of you, to criticize Her Majesty's—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. Boy oh boy, I touched a nerve in that rabid little right-winger. That's rabid spelled R-A-B-I-D, not with two Bs and a T.

I just want to tell these pages, and tell your colleagues tomorrow, that we in the NDP think you're one of the best bunches of pages we've ever had here. You guys are just super, all the young women and men who have served this Legislature who are headed home to your ridings. All of you have been outstanding. For us who have had a chance to meet your folks or your grand-folks who have dropped by, it's been a real pleasure. Shelley Martel was a page and now she's a major pain in the side to this Liberal government. She's as good an illustration of how well pages can do as anybody. I encourage you to come back here in 15 years' time and have one of these seats for yourself.

**Interjection:** Your seat.

**Mr Kormos:** In 15 years' time, pal, it could be. They'd be more than welcome to it in 15 years' time. In 15 years' time I'll be almost as old as you are, and I'll be ready to retire.

I'm looking forward to see the public auto insurance unfold. I'm looking forward to the egg on the face. This government capitulated to the NDP on our status in the Legislature and I'm looking forward to them capitulating to the NDP on public auto insurance. I'll be more than eager to help them make it happen. Howard Hampton would be more than eager to work for this government. Public auto insurance, like in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, is the only system that is fair to drivers and fair and just to victims. Public auto insurance: no more lapdogs to the private, for-profit auto insurance industry.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 4, 2003, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Colle has moved third reading of Bill 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peterson, Tim
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldeep	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Greg
Craiton, Kim	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise.

#### Nays

Amott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Hardeman, Ernie	Tascona, Joseph N.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Witmer, Elizabeth
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Yakubski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	
Eves, Ernie	O'Toole, John	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 62; the nays are 19.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Be it resolved that the bill now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** Mr Speaker, His Honour awaits.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** While we're waiting for His Honour, I wonder if I could take three or four seconds to wish all members of the Legislature a happy and safe holiday.

*His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took his seat upon the throne.*

#### ROYAL ASSENT

#### SANCTION ROYALE

**Hon James K. Bartleman (Lieutenant Governor):** Pray be seated.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present sittings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

**Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller):** The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 2, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility / *Projet de loi 2, Loi concernant la gestion responsable des finances;*

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing / *Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario à l'égard de l'établissement du coût de l'électricité;*

Bill 5, An Act to temporarily freeze automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles and to provide for the review and regulation of risk classification systems and automobile insurance rates for private passenger vehicles / *Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à geler temporairement les taux d'assurance-automobile dans les cas des voitures de tourisme et à prévoir l'examen et la réglementation des systèmes de classement des risques et des taux d'assurance-automobile les concernant.*

**Le Greffier de la Chambre (M. Claude L. DesRosiers):** Au nom de Sa Majesté, Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur sanctionne ces projets de loi.



In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

**The Speaker:** May it please Your Honour, we, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario in session assembled, approach Your Honour with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government, and humbly beg to present for Your Honour's acceptance a bill entitled An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

**Clerk of the House:** His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accept their benevolence and assent to this bill in Her Majesty's name.

Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur remercie les bons et loyaux sujets de Sa Majesté, accepte leur bienveillance et sanctionne ce projet de loi au nom de Sa Majesté.

**The Speaker:** Before we adjourn, I would like to just say to all of you Merry Christmas and thank you for your co-operation during this time. I know it's a very important role that you have all played and you have helped me carry out my duty as best I can. I look forward to seeing you all in March. I want to wish you and your families Merry Christmas and a very prosperous and happy new year.

It being after 6 of the clock, we stand adjourned until March 22, 2004, at 1:30 pm.

*The House adjourned at 1813.*

## ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
17A	850	2	22-52	<p>ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION</p> <p><b>Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):</b> It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to pay tribute to a young constituent of mine from Sarnia-Lambton who's truly an inspiration to us all. Kristopher is a 13-year-old Sarnia native who is presently waiting for a liver transplant, and he has a wish: to accomplish a 200-city-and-town walking tour across Canada to help save nearly 4,000 people who need organ and tissue transplants.</p> <p>The walking tour begins next month in Sarnia, but before that, I'm proud to tell the House that Kristopher will be here at Queen's Park tomorrow, along with many supporters, for a pre-kickoff announcement. I want to take this opportunity to invite all the members to join us at this event tomorrow afternoon, and I want to remind all members and all Ontarians to show their support for this vital health care issue and consider filling out an organ donor card. I had the opportunity to distribute these cards to other members earlier this week, and am happy to sign one myself.</p> <p>I'm proud of the amazing leadership that Kristopher is displaying on this issue, and I urge all members to show support for Kristopher's Wish. I'm happy to wear the special Gift of Life pin, which my office has left in both the east and west lobbies today.</p> <p>At this time, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent for all members to wear this special pin in support of Kristopher's Wish.</p> <p><b>The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):</b> Do we have unanimous consent to wear the Kristopher pin? There seems to be unanimous consent.</p>



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
<b>Arnott, Ted</b> (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Baird, John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	
<b>Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick</b> (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
<b>Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher</b> (L)	London West / -Ouest	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
<b>Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie</b> (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Children's Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
<b>Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J.</b> (L)	St Catharines	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Broten, Laurel C.(L)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire au premier ministre
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael</b> (L)	St Paul's	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint
<b>Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V.</b> (L)	Scarborough East / -Est	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
<b>Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph</b> (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
<b>Crozier, Bruce</b> (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président. Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin</b> (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Speaker / Président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
<b>Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L)</b>	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs (Urban) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales (Secteur urbain)
<b>Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L)</b>	Windsor-St Clair	Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	
Eves, Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
<b>Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L)</b>	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	
<b>Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L)</b>	Parkdale-High Park	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
<b>Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L)</b>	York Centre / -Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
<b>McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L)</b>	Ottawa South / -Sud	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales



Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa-Orléans	
<b>Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L)</b>	Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron-Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Mossop, Jennifer F.(L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L)</b>	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Peterson, Tim (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
<b>Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L)</b>	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	
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Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wong, Tony C. (L)	Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
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of Ontario**

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Monday 22 March 2004**

**Lundi 22 mars 2004**



Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 March 2004

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 mars 2004

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### COLLEEN ANDERSON

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I rise today to congratulate Colleen Anderson from Sundridge in my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, who was recently honoured as the 2004 Rural Woman of the Year. The annual award is presented by the Women's Own Resource Centre to mark International Women's Day in honour of the outstanding women in the Almaguin community.

Colleen Anderson is unquestionably an outstanding member of her community. For more than 40 years she has put in countless hours of volunteer work with many various organizations. Although best known for her extensive involvement in the Strong Agricultural Society both locally and provincially, her commitment to the community does not end there. She has made enormous contributions to the Canadian Cancer Society, where she exhibited her deep care and compassion for others by providing palliative care for the dying while being a key figure in the Lions Club Christmas cheer program, and to her church community. Beyond all this, she collects clothing for the homeless of Toronto, is a lifetime member of the Women's Institute, and continues to work with the agriculturally based 4-H club of Ontario.

Her commitment to volunteering and the depth of her compassion and care for others serve as a model for all of us, and we are privileged to have such a person in our community. For all she has given to those around her, and on behalf of all those who have been inspired by her tireless efforts, I would like to thank Colleen Anderson and congratulate her on being honoured as the 2004 Rural Woman of the Year.

#### CARDIAC CARE

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** Today I would like to call to our Minister of Health's attention a growing health care need in the communities of Essex-Windsor. In an article published in the Windsor Star last week, one of my constituents told his story of having to travel two hours to a distant city in order to receive angioplasty treatment that he required after waiting in a Windsor hospital for a week recovering from a heart attack.

He is only one of many who have had to wait for this procedure because it's unavailable in the area. He, along with other cardiac patients and families of patients, feels that the Windsor area is in need of its own stand-alone angioplasty program to ensure that patients in our communities do not have to wait or travel long distances to access important procedures such as this. The Windsor-Essex area patient base has grown steadily over the years, and we do have the numbers to warrant such a program.

On Friday, I told my constituents that I would always fulfill my duty to advocate for the health care they deserve and promised them that I would bring the need for a stand-alone program to you. I'm confident that the future of health care in our province is bright under our new government, and confident that the minister will continue to bring many positive changes to our health care. Minister, that's why I'm confident that after hearing my constituent's story you'll consider granting the Essex-Windsor area the stand-alone angioplasty program that it deserves.

#### HEALTH CARE REFORM

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** Tomorrow we begin second reading on Bill 8, a poorly drafted and fundamentally flawed piece of legislation. However, the government still refuses to commit to additional committee hearings on the bill, despite the fact that the legislation falls far short of addressing the essential concerns of the health providers, such as hospitals, doctors, unions and others. Furthermore, it does nothing to improve public access to medically necessary services or reduce wait times. This has occurred because the minister failed to consult with stakeholders during the drafting of Bill 8, and he also failed to respond to their concerns during the committee deliberations.

The bill still gives the minister sweeping powers and no accountability. The bill still undermines local voluntary community governance of hospitals and shifts more control over hospitals to the health ministry. The bill shifts power to the government to regulate block fees from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. The bill does not make the Health Quality Council independent, as promised in the Liberal election platform document, yet another broken promise.

If the minister is truly interested in improving accessibility and accountability, he will immediately commit to additional hearings on Bill 8. I urge the minister today to make that commitment.



## MARSHALL PARK SCHOOL

**Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing):** In February, the Premier and the Minister of Education requested that all members of this Legislature go back to school for one day to visit our classrooms and see our education system first-hand. As our students returned to school from March break and as we returned to the Legislature today, it seemed an appropriate time to report back to you, Mr Speaker, and to the members of this Legislature, about my experience of going back to school in North Bay.

I was lucky enough to visit Marshall Park school on March 11, 2004. Marshall Park is a primary school in the city of North Bay. While at Marshall Park, I visited the grades 4, 5 and 6 classes of Ms Koski and Mr Dufort. We reviewed how a bill is passed into law and what members of provincial Parliament do, and I answered a myriad of questions. I was given lovely cards of thanks by Amanda, Maureen and Jessica, signed by members of their class.

I was also fortunate enough to visit Mrs Clarke's reading recovery class, where I saw first-hand the power of one-on-one teaching. I then visited the senior kindergarten class, where we attempted to count to 100 million billion, and I was given a tour of their class.

I was happy to join the students in skipping at recess and was delighted to have lunch with the staff, the hard-working teachers at Marshall Park.

Marshall Park school is a prime example of the great work our dedicated primary teachers are doing in North Bay and across the province. I would like to thank Nancy Kilgour, principal Gail Jessup and the students of Marshall Park for welcoming me into their school and for making my visit so informative and fun. I recommend to my colleagues here in the Legislature who have not taken the Premier up on his challenge to get out there and visit their schools. You'll be glad you did.

1340

## PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Well, Ontario, guess what? We have another broken promise. It is with great sadness that I rise in the House today to highlight yet another broken promise by Dalton McGuinty and the Sorbara government. "We will hold the line on small business taxes," otherwise known as Liberal election promise number 99, was officially broken on March 15, 2004. It was on this day that Finance Minister Greg Sorbara announced that municipalities would be given greater flexibility and autonomy in setting their property tax rates. This is actually a code for giving small businesses in Ontario another kick in the teeth.

In response to a pre-election question from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business about closing the gap between business and residential tax rates, McGuinty responded in writing, "Ontario Liberals will uphold this hard cap and I will work with small business to fix the property tax mess." And how can anyone forget the election ads with the now Premier saying, "I will not raise your taxes"?

Our Bill 40 put in place a hard cap that limited how much of a property tax increase businesses had to bear in one year. The decision by the McGuinty government to suspend this hard cap is not only another broken promise but also an attack against small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario.

This government is beginning to sound like a broken record on broken promises. If they continue along this path, three and a half years from now they will go down in history as the one-term McGuinty government.

## HATE CRIMES

**Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale):** Today is International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On this day 44 years ago, a horrifying event took place in the town of Sharpeville, South Africa. On March 21, 1960, 69 people were participating in peaceful demonstrations against the laws of apartheid. They were massacred. It went down in history as the Sharpeville massacre. Six years later, in 1966, the United Nations set aside this date, March 21, as a day of remembrance. They called upon all nations and all people to renew their commitment to eradicating racial discrimination.

Ontario has long stood as a model for diversity, openness and tolerance. Toronto's citizens come from 169 countries, making it the most multicultural and multiracial city in the world. Sadly, however, even here, we are not immune from racism and intolerance. This past weekend, my riding, Willowdale, and other ridings saw vicious anti-Semitic attacks. At Bathurst Lawn Memorial Park Cemetery, 27 headstones were toppled, six benches were knocked over and a menorah was struck down. There was \$20,000 in damage. But the real cost cannot be calculated in dollars. It is counted in tears, in sleepless nights, in locked doors and in anxiety.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you. Your time is up.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent for the member to continue his statement? Agreed.

**Mr Zimmer:** How angry must a person be to destroy 27 grave markers—not simply one or two grave markers, but to spend the time and energy and anger in knocking over 27? How filled with hate a person must be to cause this pain to others.

I know everyone—everyone—in this Legislature wants to end this intolerance. We look forward to a day when racial and religious intolerance will be stamped out in every community, in every town and city, in every part of the world. But we must also do everything we can to eliminate it from here, from our own communities as well, because it still lurks. It lurks in the dark heart and in the evil mind. Our obligation is to be ever vigilant against it.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** I thought you were going to request unanimous consent because you had not gone in the routine. Are you asking for unanimous consent?

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Yes. My mike isn't on.

**The Speaker:** The member is asking for unanimous consent to make his statement. Agreed.

### SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

**M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James):** Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président et cette Assemblée. Je veux amener à l'attention de l'Assemblée un petit problème qu'on a dans la communauté francophone.

Imaginez-vous la surprise des citoyens et des citoyennes de cette province quand ils faisaient application pour avoir le baptistaire. Vous connaissez ce document, le petit baptistaire qu'on utilise pour être capable de demander un passeport, pour avoir des documents officiels de nos gouvernements fédéral et provincial ? Ils ont appris qu'il est impossible, dans la province de l'Ontario aujourd'hui, à cause des changements qui étaient faits au logiciel du bureau responsable des baptistaires, d'avoir nos baptistaires en français. Par exemple, si ton nom a un accent aigu ou un accent grave ou qu'il y a d'autres changements à faire dans le nom, tu ne peux pas avoir ce document en français.

Au-dessus de ce problème, excusez-moi, le gouvernement, ce n'est pas vous. Imaginez-vous, les Libéraux sont sensibles ces jours-ci. Le problème est que le gouvernement précédent avait fait des changements au système logiciel, et quand le changement était fait, il n'y avait pas la capacité dans le ministère pour s'assurer que la Loi des services en français avait été suivie.

Deuxièmement, on appelle cela de l'ouvrage qui n'a pas été fait à l'intérieur du ministère mais à travers des contractuels qui ont été payés par le ministère pour faire cet ouvrage. On demande au gouvernement de s'assurer une fois pour toutes que tous les services qui sont donnés à travers le gouvernement provincial, une fois sortis du gouvernement provincial comme privatisation—qu'il s'ensuit—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

### ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

**Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre):** The previous NDP and Conservative governments have left our energy sector a disaster. So imagine my surprise when I heard a conversation that took place last Friday on Metro Morning. These are the folk, the NDP, who used Hydro to buy a rain forest in Costa Rica and they cut our lifeline by cutting a lucrative contract to Manitoba.

The Tories as well squandered a North-American-wide economic boom and failed at the same time to renew our generating capacity, and yet I wonder why. I wonder if it's because Mr Tom Long received over \$2 million in a contract; Mr Paul Rhodes got more than \$800,000; Michael Gourley received more than \$4 million; Leslie Noble received more than \$300,000; and

Jaime Watt received \$800,000. Maybe they were too busy signing contracts to keep our lights on.

But better still, the member from Rainy River has taken up hydro hypocrisy. Throughout the election, and for years, the NDP has been demanding that coal-fired plants in Ontario be closed or converted. They even put it in the 2007 pledge for their platform. They wrote the Ontario Clean Air Alliance as well to close all the plants. It was their promise. At least it was until Mr Hampton, the member for Rainy River, cried to keep the coal plants open. He even said he ran on keeping the coal plants open—unbelievable.

### HATE CRIMES

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** I rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to support the sincere and heartfelt remarks made by the member from Willowdale.

There are some matters that are above politics and partisanship, and I know that all members share our sense of revulsion with the recent anti-Semitic attacks in Toronto and Vaughan. While we may disagree on many things in this House, I know we would agree that all citizens of this province have the right to feel safe, secure and welcome in their communities and neighbourhoods.

The despicable and cowardly actions perpetrated against members of our Jewish community are intolerable. We have a responsibility to do everything in our power as a province to combat this type of heinous behaviour.

Noble sentiments and fine-sounding words will not do the job. We need to take concrete actions. I was proud to be a member of a government that established a specially trained team of crown attorneys to prosecute hate crimes. I know that all members would want to build on that initiative, that all members would want the Attorney General of Ontario to prosecute the perpetrators to the full extent of the law and support police efforts to increase security at places of worship.

These recent events remind us that we must never become complacent in our battle against hate crimes.

### REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I beg to inform the House that on March 9, 2004, the report of the Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, regarding the MPP Compensation Reform Act (Arm's Length Process), 2001, was tabled.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I also beg to inform the House that during adjournment, the Clerk re-



ceived the reports on intended appointments dated March 1 and March 8, 2004, from the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information / *Projet de loi 31, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la protection des renseignements sur la santé.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 72(b), the bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

**Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

**Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / *Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Shall the report be received and adopted?

All in favour, say "aye."

All against?

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.*

**The Speaker:** Mr Flynn has moved adoption of the committee report.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time.

#### Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bentley, Christopher  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Bountrogianni, Marie  
Bradley, James J.

Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gerretsen, John  
Gravelle, Michael

Oraziotti, David  
Parsons, Ernie  
Patten, Richard  
Peters, Steve  
Phillips, Gerry  
Pupatello, Sandra

Broten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Caplan, David  
Chambers, Mary Anne V.  
Colle, Mike  
Cordiano, Joseph  
Craitor, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Di Cocco, Caroline  
Dombrowsky, Leona

Jeffrey, Linda  
Kennedy, Gerard  
Kular, Kuldip  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff  
Marsales, Judy  
Mauro, Bill  
McGuinty, Dalton  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol  
Mossop, Jennifer F.

Qaadri, Shafiq  
Racco, Mario G.  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Ruprecht, Tony  
Sandals, Liz  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sorbara, Greg  
Takhar, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Wynne, Kathleen O.

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise.

#### Nays

Arnott, Ted  
Baird, John R.  
Barrett, Toby  
Bisson, Gilles  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Eves, Ernie  
Flaherty, Jim  
Hampton, Howard  
Hardeman, Ernie

Hudak, Tim  
Jackson, Cameron  
Klees, Frank  
Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley  
Martiniuk, Gerry  
Miller, Norm  
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Scott, Laurie  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Yakubski, John

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 60; the nays are 25.

**The Speaker:** The motion has been carried and the report shall be received and adopted.

Pursuant to standing order 72(b), the bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There's a document on our desks entitled Real, Positive Change Gains Momentum. It's going to be delivered by the Premier. I wonder if he could start by changing the size of his envelopes. Look at that. Do you believe that?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I'm sure that members who are here sometimes understand what a point of order is all about.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### RECALL ACT, 2004

#### LOI DE 2004

#### SUR LA RÉVOCATION DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Barrett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Election Act respecting the recall of Members of the Assembly / *Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale en ce qui concerne la révocation des députés de l'Assemblée.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** By way of comment, this bill amends the Election Act to establish processes by which members of the assembly may be recalled. In addition to being subject to the usual

recall processes, a member who is the Premier and president of the executive council is subject to a province-wide recall process that is similar to the electoral district recall but in which all the qualified voters in the province may participate.

EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER'S  
INSURANCE PROTECTION ACT  
(INSURANCE AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DES FOURNISSEURS DE SERVICES  
D'URGENCE (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI  
SUR LES ASSURANCES)

Mr Wilkinson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to protect emergency service providers from rate increases to their personal contracts of automobile insurance / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances visant à protéger les fournisseurs de services d'urgence contre l'augmentation des taux dans leurs contrats d'assurance-automobile personnels.

*Interjections.*

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** I want to introduce to the members my niece Sarah. This is her first day as a page. She comes from the great riding of Oak Ridges.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I'm going to caution members not to do that again, please.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Wilkinson:** Speaker, I'm sure you would agree with me that when you call 911, you want the emergency response to be as quick as possible. It came to my attention recently that if in the performance of his or her public duties the driver of an emergency vehicle is involved in a collision, he or she could face an increase in personal automobile insurance premiums.

I believe and I hope all of the members agree that the number one priority of firefighters, paramedics and police should be responding to an emergency just as quickly and safely as possible. They should not fear that performing their duty could cost them and their families increased automobile insurance premiums.

MALTON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH ACT, 2004

Mr Qaadri moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the Malton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** All those in favour? Did I hear a no? All those in favour? Agreed.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Hardeman and Mr Barrett exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Hardeman assumes ballot item 51 and Mr Barrett assumes ballot item 10; and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot items 7, 8, 9 and 10.

**The Speaker:** The government House leader has moved and seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion—did I hear “dispense”? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1410

### STEPHEN HARPER

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to seek unanimous consent on a motion of congratulation congratulating Calgary Southwest MP Stephen Harper on his success on being chosen as federal Conservative leader and leader of the official opposition.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The member has asked for unanimous consent—and did I hear without debate?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Let me just hear: Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Without debate.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

#### PLAN D'ACTION DU GOUVERNEMENT

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Welcome back.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. It's good to be back, and it is my distinct pleasure to welcome all the members back to this House.

With each new session, we're given the honour and the distinct privilege of serving the people of Ontario.



Notre gouvernement s'est engagé à faire oeuvre commune pour bâtir une province plus solide qui offre à tous et à toutes une qualité de vie plus élevée.

I was saying, Speaker, that our government is committed to working together to build a stronger province with a higher quality of life for all.

Last fall, we were elected to deliver real, positive change.

Soon after taking office, we took action on our commitment by introducing a progressive legislative agenda in this House. We stopped the previous government's irresponsible tax giveaways to corporations and private schools, and we passed legislation to ensure responsible electricity pricing. The rate freeze—the one that cost taxpayers \$862 million so far—is about to be lifted.

During the last session, we introduced several other pieces of legislation that are still before this House. If passed, they will help to continue our agenda for real, positive change in a number of important areas.

For example, we introduced the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. This bill will ban pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care in Ontario. It will improve accountability. During this session, we'll continue seeking advice on ways to improve this bill as it moves through the House. We've also introduced legislation to ensure that patient privacy is protected.

To help to protect green space and build clean, vibrant communities, we introduced legislation that will discourage urban sprawl. We've also introduced a bill that will give municipalities more control over their own growth, and just last week, as part of our plan to work with our municipal partners as we grow strong communities together, we announced our intention to give municipalities the tools they need to ease the pressure on residential property taxes.

Our government has also acted on its commitment to ensure greater accountability right across the broader public sector. We've introduced legislation that would give the Provincial Auditor sweeping new powers to perform value-for-money audits of hospitals, school boards, universities, colleges and other transfer partners. Our legislation would also open crown-controlled corporations like OPG and Hydro One to review by the Provincial Auditor. We have already taken important action to open OPG, Hydro One and their subsidiaries to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act.

I'm proud to say as well that our government will continue moving forward with the legislation we introduced that would eliminate the waste of taxpayer dollars on partisan, self-promotional government advertising. Since taking office, we have put a complete stop to this practice. This legislation will ensure this waste of taxpayer dollars never happens again.

We've also introduced legislation that would require cabinet ministers to attend two thirds of question periods in this House. I can assure this House, and members opposite of course, that our cabinet is more than ready to meet this commitment.

During this session, our government will work with members to move forward on these and other important initiatives, and we will do so at all times in a manner that respects this institution and the people we have the privilege of serving. We'll continue to consult with people inside and outside this House to improve our legislation.

But our work is just beginning. Notre program de vrais changements positifs est sur sa lancée. Our agenda for real, positive change is gaining momentum.

Our government is preparing legislation that would, if passed, provide up to eight weeks of job-protected leave for those taking care of seriously ill family members.

We're going to address something that has gone unaddressed for far too long, and that is the issue of school bus safety. We believe that we must do everything possible to ensure that our children arrive at their schools safe and sound. It is a fundamental trust that parents place in our public education system. We will introduce legislation shortly to help meet this commitment.

Our government will also make important announcements designed to keep our economy strong and competitive, because when our businesses grow and prosper, it means jobs and opportunity for families throughout the province.

Speaking of growth, we embrace our responsibility to bring forward a plan that will ensure Ontarians have a lasting, reliable supply of clean and affordable electricity.

We are committed to acting on the priorities that we ran on and that Ontarians voted for. Over the past several months, we have been consulting with Ontarians to hear about the priorities and results that they expect from their government. We were open and honest about the fiscal challenges facing our province: a \$5.6-billion deficit and another \$2.2 billion in risks. They gave their best advice on how we can deliver the change Ontario needs to be strong, healthy and prosperous.

When we asked people about meeting the goal of healthy Ontarians and a healthy Ontario, they shared their experiences and their expectations. When we asked for ideas on better student achievement, we heard from people who care deeply about excellence in their public schools. When we asked about improving the quality of life in Ontario, people spoke passionately about the clean, safe communities they want and deserve. When we asked about how Ontario could have better workers for better jobs in an innovative economy, they talked about making the most of Ontario's single most precious resource, its people. When we asked about more active citizens contributing to a stronger democracy, one thing was clear: People want government to work better for them.

We're listening, and we're going to take still more action. We're going to keep delivering the real, positive change that Ontarians want, need and deserve. We're going to use people's ideas to help guide our budget-making in this year and over the course of the next four years. We're seizing the opportunity to focus government resources on the priorities that matter most to Ontarians.

We're going to work with our partners to achieve real, measurable results.

The people of Ontario will see progress in education when they see higher test scores in literacy and numeracy; smaller classes in the early years; fewer students dropping out of high school; more students going beyond high school to an apprenticeship, university or college; and more qualified new Canadians working in their chosen trades and professions.

In health care, we'll achieve the results that Ontarians want and need. I'm talking about things like shorter waiting times for cardiac care, cancer care and hip replacements; improved access to care in the community, outside of hospitals and other institutional settings; and healthier living for all of us, but especially for our children, with less obesity, less smoking and more physical activity.

I recently attended one of the budget town hall meetings held by our government, and so have many of the members here today. The people of Ontario understand the nature of the challenges facing our province. They know that change is not going to happen on all fronts all at once.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I'm having difficulty hearing the Premier. Premier, you may continue, please.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I was saying that the people of Ontario understand the challenges facing our province. They know that change is not going to happen on all fronts all at once. They are prepared to work with us to make progress on their most important priorities.

1420

Mais elle comptera sur son gouvernement pour manifester du leadership pour ainsi avoir un but commun. But people will look to government, their government, for leadership, for a sense of common purpose. That means that our ideas must be bold, our minds must be open and our resolve to make change happen must be strong. This is the kind of leadership our government intends to provide during this session and over the course of the next four years.

Someone once said that what matters most in each and every age are the ideals that inspire our efforts and the integrity of those efforts. Here are our ideals. We can have an Ontario that knows prosperity and purpose, an Ontario that is both competitive and compassionate, an Ontario that is the envy of the world, with a quality of life that is second to none.

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** The government has been elected now for almost six months. They have been sworn in for five and a half months, and they have worked all of 32 days in five and a half months. Then the Premier has the unmitigated gall to come into the House today, having actually worked about one month of the five and a half that he has been the Premier of the province, and wring his hands about things that he can't do anything about.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Could you stop the clock, please? The opposition had the courtesy of listening to

the Premier to some extent. Leader of the official opposition.

**Mr Eves:** Before October 2, the Premier had every answer to every problem in the province. He could eliminate cancer waiting lists just like that. He could balance the books just like that. He could do all kinds of things. Once elected, it appears as if he can't do anything. There's a lot of hand-wringing in this statement. I don't know why you would even bother to read this statement, quite frankly.

Talking about consultation, you have consulted. You had all the answers. Why don't you just implement the plan you gave to the people of the province of Ontario last September? What's wrong with that plan? Or did you never intend to implement it in the first place?

With respect to the future of medicare in the province, he might want to make the commitment today that after second reading, Bill 8 will go out for public hearings yet again. With the 199 amendments that will have to be made to the bill, you won't even be able to recognize it when it is done at the end of the day.

Talking about tax benefits to companies and individuals, our economy has to be competitive on an individual basis, on a corporation basis, and especially on a small business corporation basis. So far, what you have done is raise taxes for the small business community, you're giving municipalities the ability to raise property taxes on their businesses again, you're going to eliminate tax credits for research, innovation and development, and yet you talk about providing leadership and letting the province go ahead.

To date, you have broken at least 19 of your 251 campaign promises. We could go on and on and rhyme them all off, but some of the most important ones, of course, are that we will:

Not add a cent to the debt. I wonder if the Premier can stand in his place today and say that during the four- or five-year term—it's supposed to be four years—he's not going to add a cent to the debt of the province.

Cap hydro rates at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour until 2006.

Respect MPPs and democracy, with elections every four years. Where is that piece of legislation? That wouldn't take any more than five minutes to draft.

Stop all 6,600 houses on the Oak Ridges moraine. He only broke that promise 5,700 times.

Cancel the P3 hospitals in Brampton and Ottawa. You're going ahead with them.

A public inquiry into meat inspection—not done.

"I won't raise your taxes"—raising everybody's taxes all over the province.

Reduce auto insurance rates by 20%. You've allowed auto insurance companies to raise rates for an additional six months. And that's the basis upon which you're starting. All you had to do was implement the three regulations that were already passed and in place and they would have been zapped as of July 22, but you let them go till January 23.

Provide two cents of provincial gas tax for municipal transit.



Hold an election every four years like clockwork. Again, it's a five-minute bill.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Eves:** "It's coming"? You've had five and a half months. It's a five-and-a-half-minute solution.

Make Ontario's chief medical officer of health an independent officer of the Legislature.

Govern with honesty and integrity. We'll feed you a few of your own quotes during question period about honesty and integrity and transparency in government.

Respect the outcome of the Kawartha Lakes referendum on amalgamation. How come we haven't done that?

Provide mental health care. The Liberal government defeated a committee amendment to recognize the promotion of mental health in Bill 8, and the government majority defeated that. So much for mental health.

Provide autism treatment beyond the age of six. You're now going to court to prevent parents of autistic children from getting the relief they deserve.

We could just have rhymed off the 19 promises you've broken so far and the rest of the 251 to come.

**The Speaker:** Before I ask for the next response, could I get a bit of order in the House and stop this shouting across.

The next response, the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I remember when the now Premier said, "Choose change." I remember when he said, "A Liberal government would deliver energetic, responsible government," that it would "put the public good and ordinary Ontarians ahead of private interests and political cronies."

I remember when the people of Ontario said they weren't interested in any more toll highways such as the 407; when people voted against P3 private hospitals, private MRIs, private CAT scans; when people said they weren't interested in private hydro; when they weren't interested in privatizing the LCBO, TFO or TVOntario. I remember when people said they wanted to see two cents a litre of the gas tax go to municipalities so they could provide for public transit and highways and 8,000 nurses and implement the Rozanski report—put \$3 billion back into our schools.

Imagine their surprise when they got a consultation piece from the new government that said, "Well, what do you think about privatizing TFO and TVO? What do you think about privatizing the LCBO? What do you think about more private hydro and, oh, more private toll roads?"

Then people got a look at the so-called "save medicare act," and did they find that it was going to do away with the private P3 hospitals? No. Is it going to do away with private CAT scans? No. Is it going to do away with private MRIs? No. Is it going to end the privatization and cutthroat bidding of our home care system? No.

Imagine when they heard the Premier musing about doing away with the universality of the Ontario prescription drug benefit program, something that Ernie Eves and Mike Harris wouldn't even consider.

This hasn't been change; this has been an attempt to take the discredited program of the previous government, repack it and somehow sell it in another way to the people of Ontario.

Just last week, we heard the Premier's good friend and soulmate, John Manley, come and tell us that the Liberal vision of hydroelectricity for Ontario is "all nuclear all the time," and then he said, you know, many of these should be private, privately run nuke stations. I look over at the Conservatives, and I say to myself, "My God, they're even stealing your hydro policy now." All nuclear, all the time, and make it private. You guys are accomplishing more out of office than you did in office, because Dalton's going to do it for you.

1430

The problem, though, is that the real issues remain. In communities in my riding, municipal daycares are being shut down. Do you know why? They're being shut down because a government that said that they were going to put more money into qualified, quality, regulated child care—it hasn't happened. So municipality after municipality is being forced to shut down child care. The Premier says, oh, you're going to bring in legislation that will allow people to take time off work to deal with situations where someone in the family is grieving. It's more basic than that, Premier. The very daycares that allow parents to go to work are being shut down and you're the government that's allowing it to happen.

Across the province, we see young people who are trained as nurses who are now looking at working—in Ontario? No, they're looking at working in Texas, in California, in Manitoba, in British Columbia, in Alberta. Why? Because the promise to hire 8,000 new nurses doesn't seem to be there. It doesn't seem to be there, and these people can't wait around much longer. They've got to make decisions.

Then there's the case of a city like Toronto, which has had to come forward and say that the public transit system is on the verge of collapse. They're wondering where that two cents a litre is.

So forgive me if I say that the government that promised change seems to be delivering more of the same old, tired program that people voted against. New Democrats, though, are not going to let you get away with it.

## HATE CRIMES

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** It's my understanding that there is a request by the Premier.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I understand that there's unanimous consent for the following motion to be moved and be put to a vote after each of the three parties are given five minutes to speak. The motion reads as follows:

As representatives of the people of Ontario, the Legislative Assembly condemns the recent acts of anti-Semitism and expresses its continuing support for the government of Ontario's long-standing zero tolerance policy toward hate crimes.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent that the Premier put forward this motion? Do I have unanimous consent on that? Agreed.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Just before beginning, if I might, I'd like to acknowledge in the gallery the presence of representatives of the Canadian Jewish Congress, Ed Morgan and Bernie Farber; representing B'nai Brith, Mr Frank Diamond and Ms Ruth Klein; and representing the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy, Mr Hershell Ezrin.

**The Speaker:** Move the motion now that you've had unanimous consent to move that motion. Just for the procedural nature of this, move that motion now.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I move the motion as follows:

As representatives of the people of Ontario, the Legislative Assembly condemns the recent acts of anti-Semitism and expresses its continuing support for the government of Ontario's long-standing zero tolerance policy toward hate crimes.

I want to begin by thanking all members for granting unanimous consent to speak on this important matter because, in a very real sense, it would be tempting to say no; tempting to say that if we speak out, we only give these cowardly hatemongers the attention they crave, and that would only encourage them. It can be tempting to remain silent in the hope that that would make the ugliness go away. But to remain silent would be wrong, because while hate may crave attention, the fact is that it feeds off silence, it depends on indifference and it festers in the darkness. That's why hate so often comes in the night, when things are quiet and we're sleeping, when it's dark.

Hatred is the stuff of cowards, and cowards like to work under cover of darkness. It's up to the rest of us to stand up, to speak up here and now, in the light of day. It is up to us to express our outrage at the expressions of hate that have occurred in this, our province.

We know from history that silence would be tragically wrong. This occurred to me this week as I gazed at a photo on the front page of the newspaper, a photo of a door, a woman and a man. What struck me most was not the ugly scrawl written on the door, but the strength written on the face of that woman. The story below identified her as Maria Leib, an 81-year-old Ontarian and Canadian who was forced from her Romanian home during the Holocaust.

I thought to myself that she could have remained silent; she could have remained behind her door. But there she was, on the front page, arms crossed, looking the camera in the eye. There she was, speaking out, standing up to hate. She told a reporter that she wanted her door cleaned up. "I want it erased," she said. "I never want to see it again." We can erase hate if we speak up. We can check its spread by expressing our outrage. We can watch it wither under the light cast by courage.

I've often said that none of us is as strong or as smart as all of us. It is equally true that an attack on any one of us is an attack on all of us, so all of us must stand up and speak out. Let every Ontarian express outrage at the

expressions of hate that have marred this community, let every Ontarian repeat that our land is a place of acceptance, tolerance and love, and let every Ontarian echo Maria Leib's words when speaking of the stain of hatred. She said, "I want it erased. I never want to see it again."

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** I am pleased to support the Premier's motion introduced in this Legislature this afternoon. I am saddened like all Ontarians and revolted by the actions that made its introduction necessary.

The anti-Semitic attacks that we have seen in Vaughan and Toronto last week and over the weekend represent an attack on the fundamental rights of all citizens in our society to live in a safe and secure home, community, province and country. They are an attack on the very principles of equality and tolerance that are fundamental to who we are as a Canadian society. They indeed are an attack on freedoms and liberties and on the democratic principles that we all hold so dear.

These actions and attitudes have no place anywhere in the world, especially not in the great province of Ontario and the great country of Canada. They must be condemned in the strongest and most forceful way, and those perpetrators of these hateful crimes must be prosecuted in the strongest, most effective way possible.

Members of this House, of all parties, have always supported efforts by whatever government to eradicate hate crimes in Ontario. The government has established a specially trained group of crown prosecutors to tackle hate crime, to work with other crowns and police officers on hate crime. I think that we must continue to be vigilant, to support prosecutors and law enforcement officers and encourage the strongest sentences for all hate crimes, especially to increase security at places of worship.

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In a letter last week to the Canadian Jewish Congress, we certainly expressed our support for the Jewish community and for law enforcement officers and prosecutors in their efforts to bring these offenders to justice. I wish to recognize the fact that B'nai Brith has been a leader in this as well.

I want all members of the House, and indeed all members of our society, to join with the Jewish community in a solidarity rally this Wednesday. All members, I'm sure, will support all efforts to eliminate this cancer and this activity from our society. By standing up and being counted today, we will ensure a better tomorrow for future generations of Ontarians and Canadians to come.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I'm pleased to add my support to this motion. I'm sure that all members of this House feel, as I do, that it's not enough just to condemn these acts of anti-Semitism, but that it is indeed up to this Legislature to ensure that there are actions taken against those who have perpetrated this horrendous crime to ensure there are consequences to this kind of action.



Our country has always been known as a civil society. What we are seeing today is very uncivil, and it threatens the very fabric of our society. People have come from every corner of the world to this land, because they believe there is freedom here to worship, regardless of culture, regardless of creed, regardless of religion. It is that freedom that has been such an attraction to people from around the world to this country. Let us never lose that, and let us know, as a Legislature, that whatever steps need to be taken, we will take to ensure there are true and known consequences for the kind of actions we've seen.

I want to thank and recognize the response of the Toronto city police and York Regional Police. We want to ensure that they will have our absolute support in whatever steps they feel need to be taken to prosecute.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On behalf of New Democrats, I want to say a few words about the resolution and a few words about the wider situation.

First of all, to the Jewish community, New Democrats want you to know that we share your vision of a free, open and tolerant Ontario. We will not tolerate anti-Semitism, racism or discrimination of any kind. We condemn the terrible acts of anti-Semitic violence perpetrated against Ontario's Jewish community in the past few days. We hurt for the men and women who survived the Holocaust and sought safe haven in our province, only to be confronted with ugly, cowardly, contemptible anti-Semitism here.

We must speak out. We must confront this, and we must be constant in the confrontation of this. We cannot be silent even for a second. And there are real, practical steps we must take.

Many police services now have hate crime units: police officers who are specifically designated to look into these issues, investigate them and seek prosecution of them. When we see incidents such as we have seen over the past few days, it tells us that we must redouble our efforts on this front, that we need more specially designated hate crime units within our active police services, so that those who perpetrate these acts will know there is a greater likelihood that they will be found out. I would advocate strongly: We must act now to increase the number of officers who are designated specifically to deal with these cowardly issues.

Second, we need in this province, we need within the public service of Ontario, an anti-discrimination secretariat whose job it is to work with school boards, colleges and universities, municipalities and public bodies across the province to ensure that we are providing education, that when children go to school, they understand how ugly, how awful, how terrible any act of racism, any act of discrimination of this type is. This is not a costly issue. This would not cost a great deal of money. It would be a direct way, a direct step in taking this on. I believe that there are school boards, colleges, universities and community organizations across the province who are prepared to enlist in this battle immediately, but leadership must be shown. That leadership must take the form of an

anti-discrimination secretariat that says boldly and bluntly, "We recognize that these cowardly acts exist and, as a province, we're prepared to take it on and to take it on directly. We're prepared to work with all of those organizations across the province who feel the same way."

I suspect the vast majority of Ontarians are prepared to enlist in this struggle today. So I say to the Premier, I say to members of the government, I say to all of the members of the Legislature: These are two steps that would not take a lot of policy debate, they are two steps that would not take a great deal of money, but they are real, practical steps which would send a very clear signal, an unmistakable signal. They are very clear steps which could have broad, positive repercussions across the province almost immediately.

I thank all members for taking part, for participating in this, but the time for action is now. There are real, positive, practical steps that we can take now, and I encourage all of us to do that.

**The Speaker:** Mr McGuinty has moved that, as representatives of the people of Ontario, the Legislative Assembly condemns the recent acts of anti-Semitism and expresses its continuing support for the government of Ontario's long-standing zero tolerance policy toward hate crimes.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?  
Carried.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Just before we get to oral questions, I would first like to draw your attention to the following special guests in the Speaker's gallery: the Honourable Dr Paul Robertson, Minister of Development of Jamaica, and Vivian Betton, Consul General of Jamaica. I would like all members to welcome them here.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the Premier of the province. Premier, I would like to ask you today about the open, honest and transparent higher standard of government that your government referred to in its throne speech. I would like to talk to you in particular about the potential conflict situation with respect to the Minister of Finance. I would like to ask you a very simple and direct question: At any time has the Minister of Finance offered, or have you requested, his resignation?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Let me thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and take this opportunity at the outset to say that I have the greatest confidence in our Minister of Finance and to also state that our Minister of

Finance is not only a man of ability, but also a man of integrity, a man of honesty and a man who has acted appropriately in all circumstances. It is my hope that at some point in time the Leader of the Opposition will come to see this for what it actually is. If the Leader of the Opposition does not have any confidence in my opinion and judgment on this matter, then I would refer him to the Integrity Commissioner and a letter he offered in connection with this matter.

1450

**Mr Eves:** The mere fact that the Premier won't answer a very simple question with a yes or a no certainly has to tell a lot of people a lot of things; otherwise, he could very simply stand in his place on a supplementary and give us a simple yes or no to that question.

I would like to ask a further question with respect to this matter, Mr Premier. On February 18 this year, cabinet approved an order in council approving a new vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. Did the Minister of Finance declare a potential conflict in this appointment and remove himself from deliberation with respect to this appointment?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition will want to make reference to the Integrity Commissioner's letter of March 8, which, although it was delivered to the Minister of Finance in confidence, was made public. I want to emphasize that the letter was made public notwithstanding the fact that it was delivered to the minister in confidence. His conclusion is as follows: "When your conduct is assessed in its appropriate context, given the narrow range of available alternatives, I do not think that you were in a position of conflict as a result of not taking the remedial action that you took on February 25, 2004, earlier." I believe that ends the matter.

**Mr Eves:** Two very simple, direct, matter-of-fact questions, and two answers that tend to obfuscate and avoid answering the questions.

Premier, you stated on several occasions that when cabinet ministers find themselves under a cloud, they should relinquish their responsibilities in the interim, pending the outcome of any investigation. You yourself stood in your place in this House last June 17 and said to me, "You cannot fob this matter over to the Integrity Commissioner. It's about you, your judgment and your standards." I couldn't have said it better myself, Mr Premier. That's exactly what this is about. It's not a matter to be fobbed over to the Integrity Commissioner, whether somebody technically breached a section of the Members' Integrity Act.

The issue here is what your standards are with respect to clouds or potential conflicts hanging over, I would suggest to you, the most senior minister in your government. I ask you, very directly, a third question: Is it appropriate—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say to the Leader of the Opposition that in my judgment this minister does not have a cloud hanging over him. That is merely confirmed

by the Integrity Commissioner. The finance minister is not the subject of an investigation. He is not the subject of a charge. He has acted appropriately, responsibly and reasonably in the circumstances, in my judgment, and as well, coincidentally, in the judgment of the Integrity Commissioner.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Back to the Premier. Premier, thus far you have refused to stand in your place and answer a very simple question, so I'm going to come back to it. I'm asking you a direct question on behalf of the people of Ontario: Did Greg Sorbara offer his resignation, yes or no? Stand in your place and give us a direct answer.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say to the members opposite that at the end of the day I can understand why you would like to devote some attention to this particular matter. But the facts are as follows: The minister is not the subject of any investigation, to the best of our knowledge; he is not the subject of any charge, to the best of our knowledge. In my judgment, he has acted responsibly and reasonably, he has acted as a man of integrity, and this happens to have been confirmed by the Integrity Commissioner, and there ends the matter.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, you know the truth, I know the truth, we all know the truth that he did offer to resign because he did something wrong.

On March 2 you made a commitment and you made a promise to the people of Ontario. You said, and I quote, "Mr Sorbara and I have agreed that should he become the subject of an investigation, not even a charge, that he will step aside." Do you stand by that solemn pledge, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Yes.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, in light of that answer, I want to ask you, what specific procedures, as Premier, have you put in place with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with the investigations branch of the Ontario Securities Commission or with Revenue Canada, the federal tax authority? What mechanisms have you put in place to be officially informed if the scope of their investigations changes? Or are you simply going to trust the man who kept you in the dark for 66 days to tell you the truth this time? Which is it, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I'm not sure that the member opposite is intimating what he seems to be intimating. Maybe we should give him the benefit of the doubt. But surely he is not asking us on this side of the House to interfere in any kind of an RCMP investigation, in any kind of investigation being conducted by the Ontario Securities Commission. Surely he is not intimating, surely he is not suggesting, that we should somehow pick up the phone and get involved with whatever might be going on here. I will give him the benefit of the doubt and suggest that that is not what he is suggesting.

## ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Your government over the



last six months has treated Ontario citizens to a record number of broken promises. You told people that they should choose change, yet you seem to have recycled most of the program of the former government. We know the former government's idea of a hydroelectricity future for Ontario was more Bruce nuclear plants, private leases, private companies and huge profits. Now, just last week your good friend and, as I refer to him, your soulmate, John Manley, came forward and said that your government should pursue, yes, more nuclear plants, more private leases with nuclear plants, more profits and more exorbitant hydro bills. Premier, is that the kind of change you were promoting for people or have you changed your mind again?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Let me just take this opportunity to thank Mr Manley for the work he has done and to thank him for the advice he has tendered to this government.

I want to assure you that we remain firm in our resolve to put this province on a sustainable footing when it comes to ensuring that Ontarians, both immediately and in the medium and long term, have access to a lasting supply of affordable, reliable and clean electricity. But speaking of change, something that shocked me was to learn that just a few days ago the member opposite, the one directing the question to me, is now no longer committed to getting rid of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. I want to say that we remain, with that one, together with our other promise, firmly resolved to move ahead.

**Mr Hampton:** Premier, if you're firmly resolved to move ahead with the closure of the coal-fired plants, why have we seen nothing other than hiring a consultant in the first six months? And to top it off, whom did you hire as a consultant? Why, the same consultant the Conservatives used to have. That's all you've done in six months of supposedly closing down the coal-fired stations.

But the question, Premier, was this. We know the direction of the former government. It was to see more Bruce Powers, more public investment—public subsidy—but the profits go to a private company. And John Manley, your good friend and soulmate, lo and behold, what is he recommending for you? More of the same: public investment, private company operates, private company leases, private company makes off with the profits, and people's hydro bills go through the roof. Premier, what is your position? Do you endorse the Manley report—more privatization and more nuclear—or do you reject it? What's your government's position? The people of Ontario need to know.

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**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I want to make it clear that Mr Manley has offered this government advice and we look forward to carefully considering that advice. But I'm also on record—and I'm sure the member opposite knows this—that I believe that we simply cannot proceed with any kind of a progressive, responsible plan to meet Ontario's energy needs into the future without nuclear

generation playing some part of that plan. I just believe that to reject that outright would be to act in a very irresponsible way.

We intend to move forward to ensure that we have more renewable energy being supplied in the province of Ontario. We intend to be very aggressive when it comes to exploiting all of the conservation opportunities. We will do what we can when it comes to nurturing hydroelectric and cogeneration possibilities and the like, but at the end of the day, I remain convinced that we're going to have to consider nuclear as part of our energy future.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** Before the election, Premier, you promised to make public health priority number one. In your election platform, you pledged that, "Unlike the Harris-Eves government, we will not turn our back on public health." Yet we now have documents before the Ontario Supreme Court in the case involving West Nile virus where your government says that you have "no responsibility to protect public health."

I seem to remember Walkerton and the disaster there. Have you not learned anything from Walkerton? Have you not learned anything from the SARS crisis that we witnessed? Those were all questions of the protection of public health.

Which is the real position, Premier—the position that you announced before the election, or the position you are taking now where you say you have no responsibility to protect public health?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Attorney General will speak to this.

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** I say to the member that the particular procedure before the House, the motion before the House, is dealing with the question of whether or not governments held accountable by the Legislature, held accountable by the people, ought to be determining our public health policy, or whether or not we ought to have, through the justice system, the courts determining the future of public health policy.

The specifics of what the policy is, I will gladly refer to the Minister of Health on this. But you know, sir, as a lawyer and former Attorney General, that we want to have Legislatures and governments making decisions about public policy and public health, and we don't want to have these matters determined based upon the evidentiary standards and common law tests—far more restrictive—that are before the courts. I know that you know that, and I know you have fought for that as Attorney General.

**Mr Hampton:** Like many other people in the province, I can read what you're saying in this statement, and you're saying something much broader. Yes, the lawyers may use the words "protecting public health isn't my

job,” but what your government is saying is something much broader. You are essentially saying that you don’t have to fund those public health units for those mandatory public health protection strategies. You don’t have to take on that responsibility. That statement would make even Ernie Eves and Mike Harris blush. They wouldn’t even take that position. Yes, there is the instant court battle, but your government is trying to say something much broader in this court case, much more serious, something that even Mike Harris and Ernie Eves wouldn’t say. Which is it? Are you about protecting public health or are you about now stepping away and saying to municipalities, “It’s all your responsibility. You take the responsibility”? Which is it?

**Hon Mr Bryant:** I refer this to the Minister of Health.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The honourable member, my colleague the Attorney General, well answered the first part of your question. With respect to who has responsibility for protecting public health, this government takes responsibility for its actions.

On that point, I’m very happy to point out to the member that we have taken important strides in that regard. The hiring of Dr Sheela Basrur, a woman of extraordinary accomplishment, as the new chief medical officer of health stands out as a signature appointment.

Shortly we’ll have the opportunity to respond to the excellent work of Dr David Walker, the dean of medical sciences at Queen’s University.

I would say, in terms of our relationship with the municipalities, in terms of those important public health programs that they deliver, that we work with them in partnership; I’m working very hard with them right now. I think if you spoke to them, you’d find that the attitude of this government is remarkably improved from attitudes of past governments and that we look forward to building an even stronger partnership with public health delivery across the province of Ontario and the national level as well.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is for the Premier. I heard you say a few minutes ago in this place that in your view the Minister of Finance has acted appropriately—that was the phrase you used. I’m sure that is your view about recent events.

But I say to you and I ask you this: to think about what you’re suggesting now as we go back. You don’t know, I don’t know and, quite frankly, no one in this House knows whether or not the minister acted appropriately during the period from 1994 to 2004 when he served as a director and the chair of the audit committee. Indeed, there is an investigation going on now by the Ontario Securities Commission, by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, by the Canada Revenue Agency.

That’s the problem, and I’m sure you understand that. The problem is that you may have a Minister of Finance presenting a budget in this place and he may later have

been found to be alleged to have breached various rules by the RCMP, the Ontario Securities Commission and the Canada Revenue Agency. Don’t you see the issue there? That’s what ministerial responsibility—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Premier.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Well, it’s apparent to me that the member opposite wants to stretch this far beyond the realm of the reasonable.

Minister Sorbara, in his capacity as Minister of Finance, is accountable to myself and ultimately to the people of Ontario for the actions that he has taken in his capacity as minister, not for something—whatever you happen to be intimating—that might have taken place 20 or 30 years before. This is all about what happened during a particular period of time. I believe that he has acted appropriately, that he has acted responsibly. It so happens that the Integrity Commissioner agrees.

**Mr Flaherty:** Premier, the minister is not responsible to you, he’s responsible to the people of Ontario and to the crown. He’s not responsible to you. The responsibility is to the people of Ontario.

The people of Canada and the people of Ontario have seen nothing but Liberal scandal for the last few weeks: slush funds in Quebec; scandal in Ontario. Don’t you appreciate that when these kinds of allegations are made—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Flaherty:** The standard of ministerial responsibility is high, or it has been high, in Ontario. I want to ask you, given what we saw in Ottawa on Thursday and Friday, when in the course of this scandal with the Minister of Finance did you lower your standard from the British parliamentary standard to the Liberal Gagliano standard?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Speaking of a deliberate effort to reduce the standards of this Legislature, all of that was found within the kind of question that was put by the member opposite.

Let me say again to all and sundry, I have every confidence in our Minister of Finance. I believe that he has acted responsibly, that he has acted appropriately and that he has acted with integrity, and it happens that the Integrity Commissioner confirms that.

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### HATE CRIMES

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** My question is to the Attorney General. Last week I was in Israel, and I learned that criminals had defaced private property with hateful anti-Semitic vandalism in our predominantly Jewish neighbourhood in Thornhill. When I arrived from Israel, I found my community in shock from terrible anti-Semitic slurs and swastikas spray-painted on homes and cars—13 of them. This weekend in North York, more cowardly, insidious acts of vandalism took place on Jewish targets such as a synagogue, an education centre and a cemetery.



Many of my neighbours came to Canada to be free from hate and fear. Now, sadly, they are again living in fear. They want to hear and know that our government is on their side. Minister, can you assure my neighbours that our Ontario government will protect them?

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** The people you are speaking to who are in fear should not be in fear. Every part of the federal, provincial and municipal governments and every member of your community and the Ontario community is standing shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish community at this very moment, and with all those who may be targeted and are targeted for racism.

I went up on Sunday as soon as I heard about what happened at the cemetery and saw stained glass windows smashed at schools. At the synagogue I saw swastikas, and unspeakable words on the schools and on signs, posts knocked over and tombstones knocked over. It was one of the most awful things I've ever seen in my life.

I want you to know, and I want everybody to know, that this government is going to do everything it can to address that particular situation, and everything it can so that people are not living in fear, because they should not live in fear. We will do the investigation and the prosecution to the full extent of the law. People must not live in fear, and we must not let this happen again.

**Mr Racco:** Minister, I was in Thornhill on Sunday morning, where there were other politicians and some members of the community removing the last writing from the house they left swastikas on, and we did participate in the cleaning up. But while the paint can be removed, its damage stays in the community much longer, as you know. The people of my community want the idiots who did this to be brought to justice.

Yesterday, I spoke with Chief La Barge, who had spoken to Chief Fantino earlier. I understand that the two are putting together a team to deal with this matter. My community wants to feel safe in their homes, as everybody expects to. They want to know that the Ontario government will do everything possible to stop those crimes. What are you, as Attorney General, doing to crack down on hate crimes like we have seen in the last eight days?

**Hon Mr Bryant:** People need to understand that their government is in action; we're not talking about future proposals. They need to know that things are happening right now. There is, as has been said before, a team of specialized prosecutorial units made up of experts in hate crime law. They are there not only to direct others, but also to assist police officers in questions as these investigations move along.

It is the policy of the crown in this province that we will pursue to the full extent of the law any crime that involves hate toward any identifiable group. We will pursue these crimes as vigorously as possible. That's what we must do. We must send out a general message to the streets, to any people who might want to consider engaging in crimes like this, that they will in fact be held

accountable under law, because that is what a civil society does. We will make sure this doesn't happen again.

## GAMING CONTROL

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. You will know that Ontario has worked diligently over the years to ensure that its gambling industry is subject to the highest standards. You will probably also know that one way to achieve that is through a system of international agreements that are entered into with various jurisdictions around the world to ensure that gaming operations exchange information.

Minister, I'd like to ask you a question with regard to an offshore gaming operation on the island of St Kitts: I would like to know whether you can confirm for the House if that jurisdiction has ever entered into such an agreement with Ontario, as that would certainly be a reflection of the kind of operation that is going on there. Of course, your Minister of Finance has had some very intimate knowledge of that particular operation over the years. Can you confirm for this House whether such an agreement exists?

*Interjection.*

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges has just asked a very serious question that he obviously thinks is important to his constituents, and the Minister of Finance made an outrageous comment that I know you'll want to ask him to withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I didn't hear it.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I didn't hear it. If the member felt that he had made—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I'm dealing with one aspect of things now. If the member felt that he had made some comment and wants to withdraw it, it is up to him.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** Mr Speaker, if I made a comment that offended the member opposite, I certainly withdraw it.

**Mr Baird:** He used a four-letter word—

**The Speaker:** Order.

Minister.

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'd be pleased to look into the matter. I'm not aware of any connection between St Kitts and AGCO or any operation in Ontario but I'd be pleased to get back to the member, hopefully tomorrow.

**Mr Klees:** Thank you very much, Minister. I look forward to your response. I can share with this House that it's my understanding that some 40 agreements like that do exist with other jurisdictions. These are typically jurisdictions that are willing to provide that kind of information for the purpose of ensuring legitimacy within the industry. I'm sure the minister will know that these regulations, these practices, exist for the purpose of ensuring the highest standards in this industry. So I would

ask the minister to comment on whether it would have been appropriate for that facility to have registered such an agreement with the jurisdiction of Ontario.

**Hon Mr Watson:** As I said, I'd be pleased to get back on the specific case, but I can tell the honourable member that I have great confidence in the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, which is viewed as a world leader in terms of ensuring standards are at the highest for the gaming industry within Ontario. The AGCO and our ministry are often looked at as world leaders in terms of ensuring that the operations that we're responsible for, through the slots operations in casinos and charity casinos, do meet all international standards.

## ONTARIO POWER GENERATION

**Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville):** My question is for the Minister of Energy. People in Oakville have been shocked recently by allegations of impropriety at Hydro One. They were troubled to hear that during the term of the previous PC government, people who were well known to be friends of the government were awarded lucrative, untendered contracts. Minister, can you outline to the people and businesses in my riding what process you plan to use to ensure that contracts are awarded in an open and transparent manner, unlike the previous government's method of dealing with contracts?

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I think it's fair to say that many people throughout Ontario have been asking the very same question. We have come to learn since we came to office that the Tory government were anything but good managers. They left us a \$5.6-billion deficit, and at the same time they were letting untendered contracts out to their friends. They didn't subject them to freedom of information, they didn't allow public access. Five point six million dollars at Hydro One alone, and they kept the lights off when it came to that. That was their legacy.

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Let me conclude by saying that all the while they were awarding these friendly agreements that weren't subject to public scrutiny, the electricity sector in this province was falling apart. But the McGuinty government's going to fix it with a proper remedy to make sure we have electricity and lights going forward.

**Mr Flynn:** My constituents are also disturbed by the fact that during the term of the previous PC government, Ontario Power Generation plunged further and further into debt, while the future electricity needs of the province were all but ignored.

Minister, I know you have heard back from the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force, the OPG review committee and hundreds of stakeholders from around the province. Can you outline to the people and businesses in my riding what process you plan to use to ensure that the energy supply for Ontarians is reliable, affordable and secure in both the long and short term?

**Hon Mr Duncan:** The first step we've already taken is to make sure that, unlike the Conservative government—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. Member from Simcoe North, don't let me call you to order again. You're preventing the minister from responding.

**Hon Mr Duncan:** The first step we took was to make sure that, unlike the Conservative government, we won't treat Hydro One and OPG like our own private country club; that's ended. Their record on hydroelectricity: no new generation in eight years; a price cap that cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$850 million; no renewable electricity in Ontario; no development under your administration. But all the while they had money for their friends and contacts, people who didn't have to go through a tender, people who would work for a year or two and go off and get all kinds of goodies.

Well, those days are over, thank goodness. This government's bringing change to electricity. We're bringing safe, secure, reliable new supply at an affordable, predictable price for the people they ignored for eight long, painful years.

## NURSES

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Before the election, your party promised to create a rewarding environment for nurses and to ease the health care deficit in communities in the province.

Kevin Crigger is a student nurse from Dryden who wants to provide nursing care in his community; his community is underserved. He wanted to access the free tuition program for nurses, so that a portion of his tuition costs will be covered in exchange for him working for a set number of years in an underserved community. Imagine his surprise when last week he learned that the Liberals have quietly scrapped this program and, further, that the government does not have any incentives now in place to either recruit or retain nurses in underserved areas.

My question to you, Minister, is, why are you breaking your promise to nurses and to underserved communities?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'd like to thank the member for the question and the opportunity to highlight the extent to which, in five short months, we've begun to fulfill our commitments to nurses. Nurses are, at the end of the day, the heart and soul of health care. The foundations of nursing in this province are in pretty rough shape, by any analysis of the statistics.

What have we done? We've undertaken to enhance the percentage of nurses working full time, something that that party, while in government, spent \$400 million talking about and achieving very little. Already, through a recent announcement on February 24, we have created 400 or 500 new, full-time spots for nurses in this province. Second, we acknowledge that the foundations of nursing are challenged from a workplace health and safety standpoint. We've begun to work with the nursing



community in Ontario's hospitals and long-term-care facilities to enhance health and safety standards. They're working in concert with my colleague the Minister of Labour.

With respect to providing opportunities for nurses—and for doctors, for that matter—in underserved communities, our ministry is working very hard on plans that we'll roll out through 2004-05 and beyond that will enhance the capacity of the ministry to help to direct resources to those communities across the breadth of our province which are desperately in need of the resources of great health care workers.

**Ms Martel:** The question was about the free tuition program for nurses. You see, Kevin Crigger wants to practise his nursing skills and expertise in his underserved community of Dryden. There has been in place a program that would allow him to do that, and he would get a portion of his high tuition costs covered in exchange for a work service program in that community. Your government has quietly cancelled that program. Not only that, but Mr Crigger was further told that the government has no incentive program in place now to either recruit or retain nurses. So it's no small wonder that hundreds of graduating nurses will go to the United States, where they can get some of their tuition covered, instead of staying in Ontario.

The question is very simple, Minister. Your government cancelled this program. Why are you breaking your promises, both to nurses and to underserved communities?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I'm happy to repeat to the honourable member, who clearly didn't hear it the first time, that we've already begun to move on the commitments we made to enhance opportunities for nurses who are graduating from our classes this year. And I repeat what I said in my earlier statement: Our government is in the midst of developing our plans to enhance opportunities for nurses, for doctors and for other health care professionals to work in interdisciplinary approaches in those communities across our province that are currently underserved. I'm very pleased to say that great progress will be made on this very soon.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** My question is to the Premier. In 1996, I was the first minister under the Harris government to step aside when there was any question of ministerial impropriety or impropriety of our staff. I did that. The privacy commissioner made a report, and I was exonerated and came back. Bob Runciman, the Solicitor General, was the second minister, and he did the honourable thing and stepped aside. We offered our resignations to Mr Harris, the Premier of the day. We did the honourable thing. We upheld a parliamentary tradition, and we were both exonerated.

We're bewildered over here why you simply won't ask for the resignation of your finance minister, pending the outcome of several investigations that are going on,

including police investigations. Could that be because Mr Sorbara, as president of the Liberal Party of Ontario, arranged for the purchase of the house you live in in Toronto, a three-quarters-of-a-million-dollar house near Rosedale?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. That is completely out of order.

**Mr Wilson:** What's wrong with that?

**The Speaker:** You're accusing a member of making some arrangements, for which you have no grounds. Will you withdraw it, please?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Will you withdraw the comment?

**Mr Wilson:** No, Mr Speaker, because what I've said was—

**The Speaker:** Order. New question.

**Mr Wilson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't understand how you can make that ruling. It's public knowledge. I'm repeating media—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I'm sure you're familiar with the standing order that no member may impute "false or unavowed motives to another member."

New question.

#### FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

**Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls):** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. My community office in Niagara Falls receives many calls on a daily basis from concerned supporters who are either receiving or paying benefits to the Family Responsibility Office. First, Minister, on behalf of my constituents, I want to thank you for taking the time to come down to Niagara Falls and personally handle one of the Family Responsibility round table sessions. The people who participated were extremely pleased, not only to have the opportunity to express their concerns, but also to share with you their ideas on how to improve the FRO. Can you please tell the people of Ontario what your ministry is doing to improve the service at the Family Responsibility Office?

1530

**Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** I'm very pleased to answer questions about the Family Responsibility Office. In a very few short months we've made some enormous strides in an office that has a tremendous amount of work to do.

As most members in this House know, we in opposition were one of the heaviest critics of this office, and for good reason. It was virtually ignored for years. We have taken the time from the very outset to make some significant changes in the filing system, changes in the document scanning system, and implementing administrative changes to begin to allow people to even get through on the telephone.

I was very pleased to participate in round tables in Ottawa and in Niagara Falls, as the member has mentioned. It has been very fruitful, especially talking to individuals who use the system and tell us that it's important that government play a role in helping to change attitudes about people who must pay support. So I'm very pleased to have that opportunity to work with the member from Niagara Falls.

**Mr Craiton:** You talked about the initiatives your ministry is taking to address the problems at the Family Responsibility Office. What specific changes can you share with my constituents in Niagara Falls and the people of Ontario on what you count on seeing in the future?

**Hon Ms Papatello:** In about seven days we're going to begin with the launch of a pilot project using 200 individuals who use the system and advancing them PIN numbers, for example, so they can use a telephone-enhanced system 24 hours a day. That same PIN number can be used on the Internet so that they can access our office 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and get very pertinent information to their case.

Probably the most significant part of the announcement that we made at the early part of February involves a pre-release of an RFP for a case management computer system so that we can move the Family Responsibility Office to a case management model. May I tell the House that the Provincial Auditor has called for this since 1994 and it was virtually ignored by both the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives. The Liberals will not ignore these families and we are moving quickly in order to help people get the money they deserve.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** I have a question for the Premier. It's an issue that was raised earlier by my leader related to the appointment of Susan Jenah as the vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. Ms Jenah—I hope I have the pronunciation right—replaced Howard Wetston as vice-chair. During his tenure, Mr Wetston rendered judgment on former Premier Peterson's activities as a member of the board of directors. On February 18 this appointment came before the executive council.

We on this side of the House would like to know how that matter was dealt with at the executive council. We know it is the Premier's appointment. Traditionally, certainly in an appointment of this significance, the involvement of the Minister of Finance would be required and his opinion would be asked for. We would like to know if his opinion was asked for, and if not, why not, and did he declare a conflict of interest?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know the Chair of Management Board wants to speak to this.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** In response to the question, I think the public should be aware that Ms Jenah is an individual

of impeccable credentials. The Ontario Securities commissioners examined a whole series of individuals who might be appropriate for the position of vice-chair and Ms Jenah was selected unanimously by the securities commissioners to be appointed to this role. This is a person of impeccable credentials who was recommended by the Ontario Securities Commission unanimously. It came to the cabinet and the cabinet approved that on the strong recommendation of the Ontario Securities Commission for an individual, as I said, with impeccable credentials.

**Mr Runciman:** We're not talking about Ms Jenah's standards; we're talking about your standards. It appears that this is a banana-republic approach to appointments, appointing a judge who may sit in judgment. You did not answer the question. I clearly asked you, I asked the Premier: Where was the Minister of Finance? Was he sitting in on this? Did he declare a conflict? He knew at the time that an OSC investigation had been undertaken. He knew the potential for this individual to be sitting in judgment of his activities on the board of Royal. Did he or did he not declare a conflict? Is that not a concern to you as the man responsible for OSC? Is that of concern to the Premier of the province, that this individual could sit there while a person was appointed to sit in judgment of the Minister of Finance's activities?

**Hon Mr Phillips:** Again, I repeat the process that was followed. The Ontario Securities Commission was asked for their recommendations and they unanimously recommended this individual. It was recommended to the Premier to appoint this individual with impeccable credentials. That individual was appointed. I would add to the public that one of the opportunities is for the opposition to call forward these appointments, to review these appointments. I don't believe that they have yet called forward that individual, so I would just say to the public that what we're talking about here is an individual with 10 years of experience, impeccable credentials recommended unanimously by the securities commission and who was appointed to a position for which I think she is eminently qualified after having been unanimously recommended by the securities commission.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** If it's a question you're asking, it is not your turn.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I'm trying.

**The Speaker:** That's good. Good effort.

### HEALTH CARE

**Mr Kuldeep Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, as you know, I am a practising family doctor. It's a job I view as a welcome break from the daily grind of legislative work. Both as an MPP and a family doctor, I am seriously concerned about the eight years of erosion that befell our province's primary health system under the previous government. During those years I saw a larger number of patients and they



had to wait longer to see me. Minister, my question is, what has your ministry done to ensure that this situation improves in the coming years? Will Ontario families enjoy timely access to the community health care providers?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'd like to thank the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for his question. I think everybody agrees that enhanced access to primary care physicians and interdisciplinary teams of practitioners is essential for families all across the province of Ontario.

A few points that we have taken to date in our mandate to make the supply all the more ready to serve the needs of our growing population: I have made it clear in my work with Dr Larry Erlick, the head of the Ontario Medical Association, and to our teams currently negotiating a new agreement, that improving the viability of family practice is the number one goal that we all have. Our party's commitment in the last election was to build 100 family health teams across the province of Ontario. We're building on existing reforms in the area of primary care to be able to deliver on these. I'm very pleased that last week, as a result of resources made available through the primary care fund from the federal government—some \$213 million to Ontario over four years—we've introduced 45 projects that will enhance the viability of family practice all across the province of Ontario.

**Mr Kular:** Residents of my riding will be glad to know that the government has a plan that will allow them to access primary health care providers at all hours of the day. However, Minister, the front-line situation in our health care system needs improvement. Between 2002 and 2003, Ontario hospitals purchased two million hours of services from nursing agencies, sometimes at more than double the cost of employee nurses. Moreover, only 55% of our nurses are full-time employees, and they worked more than 2.7 million hours of overtime. The nurses I have worked with are wonderful, dedicated people, under a tremendous amount of stress. Minister, what have we done to ease the burden and pressure that is all too often placed on our nurses?

1540

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** In an earlier answer to the member from Nickel Belt, I had the opportunity to say what I am very pleased to say again, which is that nurses are the heart and soul of health care. The state of nursing when we took responsibility for health care in this province was a sorry state indeed. Instead of hiring full-time nurses and offering those opportunities, Ontario's hospitals were far too reliant on overtime and agency nursing.

We are working aggressively with the Ontario Hospital Association and Ontario's hospitals to enhance the opportunities inside hospital environments for nurses, and I am pleased to say, as a result of our funding announcements on February 24, some 400 to 500 new nurses are beginning full-time opportunities for stable employment in Ontario's hospitals.

We've also targeted resources, some \$14 million already, to improve the health and safety conditions for nurses operating in our hospitals. In order to have a better quality, high-performance, high-performing health care system in the province of Ontario, we need to rebuild the foundations—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

#### SPORT FISHING

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** My question is to the Premier. Premier, before the election, you promised to northerners that you were going to have no-limit fishing in northern Ontario. That irresponsible promise is right here on the cover of your northern platform. If you look at it, there's a guy on a boat and he's got six lines in the water, fishing, at the same time.

The guy is saying, "To heck with the fish stocks." The Liberals said, by way of this picture, "Use as many lines as you want when you go fishing." The cover of your northern platform advocates no rules, no conscience, no limits.

Now, true to form, you've broken that promise, another broken promise, because recently an angler in northern Ontario was charged for fishing with four lines in the water. My question simply is this: Why are you charging people for doing something that you advocated on the cover of your northern electoral platform?

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Premier, before you do that, you know that no props are allowed.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** How many Speakers are in the House?

I caution you on how much you use those props.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know the Minister of Natural Resources would like to speak to this.

**Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):** This is amazing, that the member from Timmins-James Bay has his best question of the day in bringing this forward, looking at the picture of our platform document, True North. First of all, I would say that our northern colleagues and all the candidates were very proud to run under that platform, True North. As you know from the ONTC announcement that Minister Bartolucci brought forward last week, and I did in Timmins—you were very supportive of that, and I know we'll look for your continued support.

This picture that you refer to: There's an anchor line out there; they're not all fishing lines. If you look at those—stringer lines to hold the fish. I would just say to the member that if he looks very closely, I'm sure the angler in question was using one of the lines to keep his soda pop cool in the water also, and he should be examining that. But I think seriously—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** I wanted to hear more.

**The Speaker:** Maybe he can follow up in the supplementary.

**Mr Bisson:** Minister, it wasn't soda pop, I'm sure. Mr Speaker, you asked me not to use this prop. I'm just using an election document that the Liberals put out from the previous election. So not for me to call it a prop, but listen, Minister, you talk about this particular fisherman having his anchor. Did you notice that inside that particular—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** New question.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** I want to return to the Premier. The St Catharines Standard quoted Jennifer Mossop, the Liberal member for Stoney Creek, on February 28 as follows: "Mossop"—

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member was asking a legitimate question. On what basis is he simply told, "Your question is not in order"?

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Let me remind you that I warned the member twice about props and he continued deliberately to show it. If he decided to continue to do that, I had no alternative but to move on. If he wants to get his question in—you follow the procedures of the House.

Member from Nepean—

**Mr Hampton:** With respect, Speaker, this is an auditor's report. Is it a prop?

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Baird:** Could we get the time restored on the clock? Thank you, Speaker.

The St Catharines Standard quoted Jennifer Mossop, the Liberal member for Stoney Creek, on February 28 as follows: "Mossop said the entire Liberal caucus was put through integrity sessions with the party shortly after being elected and before the cabinet was selected." Premier, there are now three investigations going on, including a criminal probe by the RCMP. I want to ask you specifically, before you offered the Minister of Finance the twin responsibilities as the custodian of investor confidence, protecting seniors' pensions, and chief steward of global confidence in our capital market, did he report to you any problems or irregularities with respect to his nine-year involvement with Royal Group Technologies?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Mr Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to inform you and the member opposite that we went to extraordinary lengths in meetings with all members, prospective cabinet ministers, to ensure they were people of integrity, and if there were any problems, that we might do what had to be done in order to address those. I can assure you that all those members in my cabinet have been subjected to the most rigorous examination and have met the highest standard, and the rest speaks for itself.

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** The Toronto Star reported on January 31—

**The Speaker:** Supplementary.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** You should withdraw the comment that you made. You said that you refuse to.

**Mr Wilson:** I tried twice to stand up here after—

**The Speaker:** Let me hear it now, then.

**Mr Wilson:** Right. So much for democracy. I withdraw the previous question.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary.

**Mr Wilson:** I would like the opportunity, Mr Speaker, to ask that question.

**The Speaker:** They can have the supplementary now.

**Mr Wilson:** Mr Speaker, in the Toronto Star of January 31 this year the headline reads, "Premier Gets a House, Courtesy of Party." My point was that Greg Sorbara was president of the Liberal Party of Ontario, who bought the Premier the house.

Secondly, on March 8 the Toronto Star said, "Absent-minded Premier Forgets to Return the Keys."

"McGuinty, who stayed at Finance Minister Greg Sorbara's Palm Beach, Florida, home in January, forgot to return the keys," blah, blah blah.

My question to the Premier is—because we're wondering why he won't ask his minister to resign and do the honourable and parliamentary thing—Mr Premier, are you sure you're not in the pockets, so deep, of Mr Sorbara that you're unable to have clear judgment with respect to the—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: That clearly violates—

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Duncan:** Standing orders are not—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Duncan:** All right. Standing order 23(i) very clearly prohibits imputing motive by one member to the other. If he doesn't withdraw it, he should be removed from the House. You've cut him too much slack.

1550

**The Speaker:** Are you going to put a question?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I presume you don't want to hear the answer, then. Premier.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I will do my utmost in the most trying circumstances to answer each and every question put to me by the members opposite, but I choose very deliberately not to dignify this question by answering it.

**Mr Baird:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to give notice of my dissatisfaction with all of the Premier's answers, and we will be filing the necessary paperwork.

**The Speaker:** Do the necessary paperwork and let me have it.



## PETITIONS

### ENERGY CONSERVATION

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas smart meter technology, which allows electricity users to read the exact amount of electricity they save by turning off air conditioners, individual lights etc, has been found to reduce users' hydro bills by 15% to 20%;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all hydro consumers in Oxford county have the option of using smart meter technology."

I present this on behalf of a lot of signatories from Oxford county, one of best counties in Ontario.

### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I received this petition by registered mail. It is addressed to the government of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned property owners and tenants, strongly oppose the current value assessment system in Ontario. The 2003 current value assessment system is too high and we will show strong resistance. There may be a tax revolt.

"We believe the municipal tax system should reflect the following principles: (1) ability to pay should be a consideration; (2) property taxes should be related to services 100%; (3) homeowners should not be penalized for improving their properties; (4) dependence on the residential property tax to raise provincial and municipal revenues should be reduced; (5) the assessment system should be stable over a long period of time—10 years; (6) assessments should be objective, accurate, consistent, correct, equitable and easily understood—house sf class price; lot sf class price, garage sf class price; and (7) the owner should be authorized to approve the assessment."

Since I agree with this petition, I am delighted to sign it.

### CHILDREN'S NUTRITION

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas recent scientific research has proven there is a link between children's nutrition and academic performance; and

"Whereas less than 25% of Canadian children eat in accordance with Canada's food guidelines; and

"Whereas Breakfast for Learning, the Canadian Living Foundation, is the only national non-profit organization solely dedicated to supporting child nutrition programs in Canada; and

"Whereas the need for nutrition programs in schools has more than doubled, resulting in grant requests that far exceed the level of funding received from the Ontario provincial government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit government support to child nutrition programs by increasing funding to Breakfast for Learning, the Canadian Living Foundation, from \$4.5 million to \$9 million, as requested in their submitted proposal."

I support the petition.

### SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** It is my great pleasure to introduce this petition in the Legislature. It says:

"I agree it's time. Our community can't afford to pay more for the construction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital. We have already done more than our fair share. The Liberal government should immediately pay 85% of the cost of construction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital. The time for action is now."

It's my pleasure to introduce this petition on behalf of my constituents, and of course I agree with them entirely.

### CHILD CARE

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I have a petition from hundreds of concerned parents à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

"Whereas the caregivers of private day nurseries are limited to a maximum of five children at the same time based on the day nursery act;

"Whereas the schoolchildren need a place before and after school for 90 minutes at a time;

"Whereas the youngest children learn from the older children...;

"Whereas the before- and after-school programs are full and the children are on the waiting list, and do not have anywhere to go because of the limit of five children;

"Whereas the parents will be relieved to have a place for the schoolchildren who have been with the same caregivers for a long time;

"Whereas the caregivers are not part of a union, they also need to work the same as the union public daycare;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario amend the day nursery act to authorize the caregivers to have a higher number than five children of less than 10 years old."

I gladly sign this petition.

### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** I have a petition that's signed by several hundred people in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians."

I agree with the several hundred signatures already on this petition and I affix my name to it.

### OAK RIDGES MORaine

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** It's my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is an ecological treasure that warrants protection and careful stewardship now and in future generations;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has recognized the importance of the moraine with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, to protect natural and water resources, preserve agricultural lands and provide clarity on where development can and cannot occur;

"Whereas the act has resulted in certain limitations on citizens' use of their property within the moraine;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take action to ensure there are no undue restrictions on Oak Ridges moraine residents making minor improvements to their homes and property; and

"That the province of Ontario work together with municipalities and land owners to ensure the interpretation and enforcement of the act continues to fully protect the moraine while also giving residents the right to fair and reasonable enjoyment of their property."

I'm pleased to support and sign this on behalf of my constituents.

### TUITION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I have a petition here that was sent to me by the Canadian Federation of Students, and it's signed by students from George Brown College. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario are the second highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and" even "tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken the leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs, and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I present this to you, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much.

1600

### ABORTION

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge, addressed:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Parliament assembled:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"That Ontarians are being asked to consider alternate forms of health care delivery due to escalating costs; and

"That 65% of Ontarians surveyed in October 2002 objected to the public funding of abortion on demand; and

"That almost all abortions are done for 'socio-economic' reasons in Canada; and

"That the Canada Health Act imposes no duty on provinces to fund any services other than those that are medically necessary; and

"That there are no legal impediments preventing provinces from de-insuring abortion.

"Therefore, your petitioners call on the province of Ontario to enact legislation which will de-insure induced abortion."

I attach my name thereto.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** It being 4 of the clock, and according to standing order 30(b), I am now required to call for orders of the day.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

#### DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 16, 2003, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I am very pleased to join in the debate with respect to the



speech from the throne. I am here today with the member from Durham. I hope he remains here with me to listen to this debate. I know he always does.

I'd just like to say that we're entering the spring session. I can tell you that it's going to be a very interesting session, in terms of the agenda. I'm looking forward to a number of government initiatives. Hopefully, they're going to keep their promises on some of these initiatives. I don't know which ones, but I know that during the break there were a lot of issues that came about with respect to the nuances, I would say, of the Premier in terms of what he was going to do one day versus another day. He was talking about now putting tolls on all the 400 series of highways. He was talking about selling off the LCBO. He was talking about bringing back photo radar, all different measures that I think will probably irritate the voter as opposed to building a consensus in terms of living up to your promises.

But I think the one that really struck the nerve of my constituents in terms of all these musings by the Premier during the break before the spring session began was the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors with respect to the comments that were made about delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors and talking about a means test for seniors with respect to drugs. I've got a petition here of close to 500 names that has been building steadily with respect to this particular issue. It's a very serious issue for seniors. And seniors don't like it. They don't think it's fair. I don't think it's fair with respect to having seniors who have paid their taxes, who have an expectation that they're going to be supported by the government with respect to their health care, suddenly read in the paper comments by the government—that never ran on this—that they were going to start to means-test seniors, delist drugs and impose user fees on seniors. I can tell you that the message they're conveying to me is that it just won't wash. Seniors do not want that. We're going to continue to push on this issue in terms of making sure that the government backs down from means-testing seniors with respect to their drugs.

I guess we're going to have to wait until the budget comes out, depending on who's going to deliver the budget, whether it's the current Minister of Finance or some other individual, depending on what happens with respect to the issues of the day. But that is a serious issue, and it's not one that this government should take lightly. They never ran on imposing a means test on seniors. They didn't run on any issue that was going to detrimentally and negatively impact on the quality of life or the quality of health care provided to seniors. It's an important issue.

I have elderly parents, and I can tell you that they rely on health care. The older they get, obviously they rely on the community care access centres, they rely on the fundamental system of making their health what it should be. To now talk about cutting back on drugs and means testing of drugs for seniors, I can tell you, I didn't see any of that in the speech from the throne. I didn't see it in the Liberal agenda, in terms of when they were running, that they were going to go after seniors.

But it seems that they're going after a lot of things, let alone breaking their promises in terms of what they've done with hydro. When people get their hydro bills this month from their local utilities or Hydro One, they're going to have what we call shock from their bill. There's going to be sticker shock, I can tell you, from what's going to happen with respect to that hydro—the 9% that the government has allowed the hydro utilities to put on their bill. Then we know, come April 1, we're going to move into the Liberal agenda or formula for hydro prices, which is going to be another impact on consumers with respect to what they're going to pay.

The Liberals can talk about what was going on with how hydro was handled and whatever; the bottom line is, if this government had run on the platform that they were going to do what they did to hydro on the second day after they were elected, they wouldn't have been elected; not a chance. If they'd come out with a program saying that, "We're going to make sure that you pay for hydro based on this particular formula" that they have come up with that they think is fair—and they're going to put all that on their books too, in terms of trying to achieve a balanced budget on the backs of all the consumers here. They basically broke their word with respect to hydro. That's what we're going to find happens in this particular budget.

They've also broken their word with respect to a lot of other issues, in particular IBI funding. The Premier made a commitment. This is another petition I have that I've been collecting in my riding. We're close to 1,000 names with respect to this particular issue. I want to read it. It says:

"Whereas our new Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his Liberal government made a campaign commitment to expand funding for valued therapy for autistic children; and

"Whereas the families of autistic children continue to call upon the province to extend funding to children six years and older, who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) treatment; and

"Whereas the new Premier has admitted, 'We simply don't have enough people right now with the skills to help those children under six, let alone those over the age of six'; and

"Whereas the Liberal Premier, Dalton McGuinty, described the current cut-off age as unfair and discriminatory;

"We, the undersigned, petition the" Legislative Assembly "of Ontario to force the government to live up to its promise and extend funding to children six and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) treatment."

What has happened with this is, the Premier made a promise during the election that he was going to address this issue. What he has done is nothing. What he has done is made sure that the court action that is denying the benefits to these parents—and there are a number of autistic children in my riding where the parents have taken the government to court, and the government

continues to resist, the government continues to fight the parents of these autistic children with respect to IBI funding, whereas the Premier made a written commitment to these parents during the election that he was going to do something about it. Well, I didn't see anything about it in the speech from the throne. I guess we're going to have to wait to see if anything is going to happen in the budget with respect to helping children who require IBI treatment and to help their parents with respect to this disability.

So there's another campaign promise on the backs of the citizens of this province, of children who need the assistance. They need to know that the government actually cares about them. It's all right to care for people and say you're going to do things during the election, like hydro. "We're going to freeze hydro prices. We're not going to do anything to hydro. We're not going to do anything to seniors. We're going to make their lives better." Then you come out and say, "We're going to put a means test on seniors and also autistic children." You don't take advantage of people who are in need and then don't live up to your commitment. It's not right.

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Another area that was initiated by our government with respect to the nutrition program in schools is another one where I have a petition going, because we need more money from the education ministry. I know the Minister of Education has made a lot of talk about how he is going to improve the education system and how he is going to look after education. Well, here's a good example of doing nothing.

I presented this petition in the House today with respect to the importance of Breakfast for Learning, run by the Canadian Living Foundation. The need for nutrition programs has more than doubled in this province, resulting in grant requests that far exceed the level of funding from this government. What they're looking for is an increase in the funding from \$4.5 million to \$9 million. I think it's important because what we're looking at is a very fundamental issue here in terms of making sure there's a link between nutrition and academic performance. Recent scientific research has shown that there is a link. We're looking for this government to look after children and the education system, as they promised during the campaign, and make sure that what we have here is a government that will look into the nutritional needs of our students.

The Minister of Education is really a peculiar cat. He came into my riding during the election and met with a number of constituents in the kitchen of one individual, dealing with the issue of getting a new school in Georgian Glen. In his comments in the paper—I've sent it over to the minister; he's got a copy of his comments in the paper—he is basically saying, "You want a new school at Georgian Glen? As soon as we get elected, you're going to get one. No problem." Everybody who knows how schools are built knows that that is an unfabricated basis for a statement. The fact of the matter is, he has done nothing. I've been after his office to ask,

"What are you going to do about this?" I've gone to the Simcoe county public board to ask them what they're going to do about this school. They say it's in the planning stage.

This minister, when he came into the riding during the campaign to help his little compatriot get elected against me, said, "We're going to get you a school right away." Well, we haven't seen that school. That's the integrity of this Minister of Education, coming in and basically making a comment that he had no intention, up to this point, of even committing to or fulfilling.

The most recent issue I'm dealing with him on is his comment saying, "We're going to stop school closures," which he made last year. There's another one that, when you read between the lines, he's saying one thing, and then what is he doing? He basically has come out and said, "That doesn't apply to schools that are currently under the process." Well, what is he talking about when he says there are no more school closings? I'm dealing with one in my riding right now—Prince of Wales school. We've been trying to get a meeting with him for weeks and weeks. People from the school are saying, "What is your intention with respect to this school? Can we have a meeting?" We deal with the scheduler, and the scheduler says, "We'll get back to you." We haven't been able to get a meeting with the Minister of Education at all, let alone the consideration of trying to at least listen to the concerns of the parents and students from Prince of Wales school.

This Minister of Education is a peculiar cat. He really likes to talk it up but he doesn't do anything about it. I'm calling him out today, saying, where's the school in Georgian Glen? Where is our meeting with Prince of Wales, the school you said wouldn't be closed, which is in fact being reviewed by the Simcoe board for closure? Obviously he doesn't follow up on what he says in the press in terms of what commitments he makes.

We're dealing with a Minister of Education who obviously doesn't know what he's talking about, because he doesn't fulfill what he says he's going to do. I've got a real problem with what he promised during the election with respect to a new school in Georgian Glen—we need that school—and also Prince of Wales school, which we don't need closed either, even though he says no schools will be closed.

There are some major issues here. The government said during the campaign, "We're going to improve health care." They made the same nonsense comment in the throne speech about how they're going to strengthen "the foundation for change." I don't know what change they're talking about.

In my riding, we have a need for a regional cancer care centre, which was committed to by the government I belonged to. At this point, I'd like to know where it is in the planning stage. We had basically been approved for it. Where is it going? We can't get a response to my satisfaction from the Minister of Health with respect to what they are doing about cancer care. We need that treatment. We can't have everybody coming down to



Princess Margaret or Sunnybrook in Toronto. We need to have access closer to home.

I know the member from Simcoe North and the member from Simcoe West would share that. It's important that we get radiation treatment in our ridings and in Simcoe county. Where is that in this "foundation for change"? We're not seeing that. Is it because we are in a rural area that all of a sudden you forget about what's going on north of Highway 7, or you forget what's happening if it's not in the southwest of this province?

We have needs, and we need to get this government to commit to the health care changes we have in Simcoe county, one of fastest-growing areas of this province. Also, there's a need for expansion of the Royal Victoria Hospital. Without question there is a need for that because of growth. It should be on the agenda of this government to make sure they're going to make health care even better.

They talk about reducing waiting lines and making health care more accessible. Yet when they get in, they bring in Bill 8, which essentially is going to make sure they get rid of the boards of directors of hospitals. What they're also talking about is that they don't want to have a hospital-based system. They want to move away from the hospital-based system and into community care. If that's going to happen, they have to make some fundamental changes with respect to the supply-and-demand side of our health care system. It's not going to work, because people go to the hospital for their needs, and that's not going to change.

There are some major things that need to be done by this government that they have backed away from since the campaign.

In my own riding, we're still waiting for GO Transit. I understand that the talks between GO Transit, the city of Barrie and the Ministry of Transportation are ongoing. We want to make sure that happens. We need GO Transit up in my area. It was committed to and promised by our government—the Conservative government—when we were elected, and a change in government should not change the fundamental plans, which were sound business plans, to bring GO Transit to Barrie.

I hope the minister is aware of that, along with the other issues of expanding Highway 400 and providing other routes to make sure the pressure on Highway 400, and also up to Highway 11, is alleviated, because growth is not going to stop. Simcoe county is an attractive area, in terms of the growth we need up there, and the commuters who are going up there, plus vacationers, put pressure on Highway 400.

There are a lot of issues within my riding. They're talking about "strengthening the foundation for change." That's fine and dandy. The bottom line is, when you make a promise during an election, you should keep that promise. You shouldn't be breaking promises, and you should not be gerrymandering through your own elected members to the detriment of other members who are not of the same party stripe.

I can tell you that where there are needs in this province with respect to dealing with health care, education

and social services, along with transportation, this government has to get serious that they're a government for all the people all the time. They can't just pick and choose. They've got a lot of elected members from the city of Toronto and surrounding GTA areas. They've got to get serious about representing everybody, and they have to look at the business case scenario to make sure that happens.

I have to say, on this spring agenda, that we're looking at initiatives from this government that are obviously going to impact a lot of different areas. All I can say is that the promises they've made and didn't commit to have detrimentally impacted the quality of life of a lot of citizens in this province, be it autistic children and their parents, be it seniors who are going to have their drugs taken away from them, be it education programs or not providing sufficient money for the nutrition program, and now the public is going to find out the hydro prices. They're going to have bill shock when they see the prices come out, because the Liberal government, in their own will, decided, "We can get elected by conning the people that we're not going to do anything to hydro," and then they got in and within two days they changed the whole hydroelectric system.

It's going to be a detriment on the backs of consumers. They're going to see it, and see a slowdown in the economy and a loss of jobs because of that knee-jerk reaction with respect to hydro. You're going to see a slowdown in the economy from this budget, in terms of the number of issues they're going to take. There are going to be all kinds of sin taxes and measures to put blocks in front of the construction industry. I fully expect them to make sure that home building in this province grinds to a halt. Even though we have low interest rates and peak demand, I think this government is going to make sure they find an urban sprawl agenda that will kill the housing construction industry and make sure we move into a recession. That's where we're headed with the policies of this government.

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**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Questions and comments?

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Speaker, I was in the last election like you. I was out there pounding on doors, walking up and down streets and going to Wal-Mart, Canadian Tire and the post office engaging in dialogue with the citizens of this province. The member makes a good point in his speech: I specifically remember a number of campaign commitments being given in the last provincial election. For example, I remember knocking on doors and people saying, "We need to rehire those 8,000 nurses that the Conservatives fired in previous terms." I remember saying, "Hey, we're promising that," and they said, "The Liberals are going to do it." I remember knocking on doors in the education community, and people said, "The Rozanski report now. We need money invested back in the classrooms so our kids are able to get the very best education." I said, "It's in our platform."



Excuse me. Can I use my election platform in the Legislature? I'm going to have to get a ruling on that, but that's for another debate.

I said, "Here it is. It's in our platform." They said, "It's in the Liberal platform too. We're going to vote for them." Fortunately in my riding—and I want to thank all the voters in Timmins-James Bay—they didn't buy it. The majority of voters said: "We know what Liberals are like. Liberals go out and campaign, and they sound like New Democrats." They say "Rozanski now!" They say, "Hire the nurses back." They say, "Do what has to be done in the Oak Ridges moraine; yes to public power; no to nuclear power." That's what the Liberals said in the election. They sounded just like New Democrats.

But a funny thing happens when Liberals get elected to government. You saw it with Jean Chrétien and you're seeing it with Dalton McGuinty, and God forbid that we see it with Paul Martin: Liberals campaign like New Democrats, but they act like Conservatives once they get elected, and they pale. I tell you, Ernie Eves and Mike Harris are frustrated now because they wouldn't have been able to do half of what these Tories are now doing in the Liberal caucus.

**Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre):** In the speech from the throne, Lieutenant Governor Bartleman spoke of Ontario's parliamentary tradition that allows for a peaceful and orderly transition from an old government to a new government. We were reminded of the words that are carved in this chamber: integrity, industry and intelligence. I believe it's an extraordinary privilege that each of us has been given by our constituents. Ontarians can do anything they choose when they work hard, dream hard and build together.

The suggestion has been made that we backed away. Yet here we are, the speech from the throne read not once but twice—I think one member actually referred to this as an abuse of the parliamentary system and another considered it silly. We also debated whether to debate the throne speech. The most remarkable event in all this is that no one can remember this having taken place previously.

We haven't backed away from anything. We still dealt with the \$850-billion problem that was borne by the taxpayers of this province, and that's not going to continue to happen. Ontarians chose change to do our business better, wiser, more openly and more transparently. They chose change within a fiscal framework that is responsible: Spend the dollars, spend them wisely, but only when you have your house in order.

Government is about leadership, and the people of Ontario chose wisely when they gave that leadership to Mr McGuinty. Our plans are clearly articulated in the throne speech and, for example, we have in fact said to all of our seniors that you will remain at the 750-kilowatt price. We must move ahead. A sense of urgency exists with regard to fiscal issues. Let's remember to do it with integrity, with industry and with intelligence.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on my

colleague from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford's speech from the throne. It's fitting that we were debating this on a day when Mr McGuinty was talking about his statement, made earlier today, called Real, Positive Change Gains Momentum. I would say it's anything but that.

I'd like to pick up on something Mr Tascona mentioned about the Minister of Education. He came into our riding a couple of times, one time on a visit to a school with the candidate; that was prior to the election and they claimed it was an educational type of visit, but of course it was an election campaign visit. Second of all, on his promise and the promise of the Liberal Party to our riding, they handed out brochures, did radio ads and handed out information at the all-candidates' meetings suggesting that the funding formula wasn't working. So I am already amazed. If the funding formula wasn't working, why haven't they changed the funding formula? When they said the funding formula wasn't working, they said that the students in the county of Simcoe, with its two school boards, were being underfunded by \$1,000 a student. The fact of the matter is, during the election they used Muskoka chairs at a school and tried to compare Simcoe county to Muskoka, asking for \$1,000 more per student, saying that if they were elected, they would give \$1,000 more to the students in Simcoe county. That's \$75 million.

Our school boards are looking for that \$75 million. We expect that the Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education, who is not here today, but who I believe should come up with that kind of funding—he's the one who sat here and criticized our government's funding formula, that it wasn't working. We in Simcoe county are looking for the \$75 million he committed to during the election campaign and made promises about. We are expecting that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has two minutes in summary.

**Mr Tascona:** I'm really pleased to respond to the comments. The member from Timmins-James Bay made the comment with respect to campaign commitments, and he's right. There was a commitment with respect to a number of areas, which the government has, I would say, backed away from. The member from Etobicoke Centre said, "We haven't backed away from anything." Come on. Where have we been since October? They've been backing away every day from commitments.

They're not hiring nurses; they're not bringing in new doctors. They changed the hydro program. They also raised taxes. They said they wouldn't raise taxes. Of course they raised taxes, and they also did it retroactively, which is probably unprecedented in the history of this province.

The member for Simcoe North goes back to that peculiar cat, the Minister of Education, who comes into ridings, makes promises and does nothing. Yes, we need that money for our boards of education. He harped on for four years about the underfunded funding formula for education. We need \$75 million to make sure we are treated equally across this province with respect to



education in Simcoe county. We'll have to wait and see if it happens in the budget, but I know from my own experience with him, I can't get a meeting with him to discuss school closures in my riding. Also, he comes in and promises a new elementary school at Georgian Glen. You can't get a meeting with him; you can't even get him to respond about it. It's a waste of time with respect to how the Minister of Education approaches education. He says one thing and doesn't do anything.

On the speech from the throne, I just want to say, whether you read it once, twice or 10 times, who cares? This government isn't living up to its promises.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Timmins-James Bay.

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**Mr Bisson:** Mr Speaker, you'll remember the last time we were in debate I had to move adjournment in order to allow the official opposition to be able to do their leadoff, and I hadn't actually started my speech. I would ask for consent for that now.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Timmins-James Bay has asked for unanimous consent so that he can speak, although he did very briefly once have the floor. Do I have unanimous consent? Thank you.

**Mr Bisson:** It was a very brief speech. It was, "I move adjournment of the debate." But I won't do that this time.

Just for the record to show it, as we know, the rotation is that the government does their speech. Then you have to move adjournment of the debate in order to allow the Tories to do theirs the next time around. That's what that was all about.

Mr Speaker, I'm so pleased to be here with you tonight—this afternoon. Tonight is not a night sitting; it's an afternoon sitting.

A throne speech is what defines what a government intends to do over the next little while, while this particular session is active. As you know, the government at one point could decide to prorogue the House while it's in its mandate, in order to start a new agenda, and that has happened from time to time. So this particular government just got elected on October 2, 2003, and they brought their throne speech to this Legislature. This is our opportunity to comment on that throne speech.

I just want to say up front that there are many things in the Liberal platform and within the throne speech that I agree with.

For example, I know that the government in the last election ran on cancelling P3s; those are private hospitals. The former government, the Conservatives, had decided they were going to privatize certain hospitals and they called them P3s. We and the Liberals, in opposition, didn't like that and were in opposition to it. We thought it was a good idea to cancel those particular ones.

For example, I agreed with the position that my caucus and the Liberal caucus took when it came to development on the Oak Ridges moraine, and it was also contained in that throne speech.

For example, I agreed with the Liberals when it came to the position they finally took—it was changed a num-

ber of times, by the way—on electricity in this province, where in the last election they had said that there should not be any private development of electricity in Ontario. I agreed with them. The Liberals back then, in opposition, under the leadership of their then-opposition leader Mr McGuinty, were opposed to the privatization of electricity, and I agreed with that position. It was good to finally see the Liberals join New Democrats in that particular fight.

I agreed with the Liberals when they said no to nukes. We stood in this House in the last Parliament and, I'm telling you, every Parliament since I've been here—and this is my fourth one. How many times have the Liberals and New Democrats stood in this House and said, "What a fiasco. The Tories built Darlington and we're still paying for it. It was way over budget"? I forget the exact numbers now. Help me out, if somebody could. I think it was supposed to come in at \$3 billion and it ended up coming in at \$11 billion or \$12 billion. It wasn't off 100%, it wasn't off 200%; it was off by a whole bunch. We and the Liberals said at the time that that was a stupid thing, that they shouldn't have moved forward with nuclear energy at Darlington. It was going to cost a lot of money. That particular technology is only viable if the government subsidizes it entirely. It's a very expensive way to produce electricity.

As I said, I find myself in a bit of an odd position. When the Liberals were in opposition I agreed with a number of positions that they took. But my problem is that their actions since the election are totally opposite to what they said prior to the campaign, when they were in this Legislature in the previous Parliament, during the campaign and even to a certain extent what they put inside their own throne speech. I want to go through some of that.

I said earlier, in a rotation to responses to questions and comments to my good colleague in the Conservative caucus, that Liberals have a bit of a habit. They love talking like New Democrats before an election and during an election. They love the NDP. I really believe that most progressive Liberals are actually New Democrats, but they figure the only way they can attain power is to run with the Liberals, with the rest of the right-wingers in that caucus. I've just got to say you really sound like New Democrats when you're in opposition. You sounded like New Democrats when you were out campaigning.

I have to say that my leader, Howard Hampton, the leader of the New Democratic Party caucus, said today that that government of Dalton McGuinty's, the Liberal government of today, is quite frankly pretty far right-wing. I think they're doing things that are further right than even Ernie Eves would have tried.

For example, Ernie Eves finally came to the conclusion that the opening of the market was a stupid thing to do. They tried to open the market a couple years ago and electricity prices went through the roof. Ernie Eves went, "Whoa, whoa, we've got to stop this," so they somewhat closed the market. They didn't quite close it,

they subsidized it: They closed the market and subsidized the private sector.

I remember the position we as New Democrats took when Ernie Eves decided to subsidize the price of electricity. We said, "All you're doing is trying to hide your privatization of electricity, because nobody wants to build nukes or any other kind of power generation in this province at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. What you're doing is subsidizing the price of electricity in order to attract investment by the private sector." Why should we in government use taxpayers' dollars to subsidize something that the private sector can't do itself at a better rate than the province can? The Liberals agreed with that prior to the election but when they got to power, it became quite different.

I was very surprised to see—I shouldn't say I was surprised. I wish I had been surprised, but I wasn't. Mr Manley, Mr McGuinty's good friend—he was Deputy Prime Minister, wasn't he, and finance minister—has been hired by the government in order to give recommendations to the government on electricity policy in this province. Mr Manley—surprise, surprise—came back and said, "Nukes now, nukes all the time, and just nukes all the way."

I just have to say to the members of the assembly, this is not the first debate we've had on nukes. We had that debate back in the 1970s and early 1980s when it came to the creation of Darlington. New Democrats stood in the House then and said it was a bad idea, because nowhere in the free world or behind what used to be termed the Iron Curtain is there any electricity development in the nuclear sector that's done entirely by the private sector, unsubsidized by the public taxpayer. For example, if you look where they're building nuclear power today, there are about 20 nukes being built in China, entirely paid for by the state. If you take a look in France, where there's nuclear power being built, again, you've got basically the state of France, by way of their taxpayers, subsidizing the cost of building nuclear power. It happens to be their energy policy. They happen to believe in nuclear power.

The point I make is, there is nobody in the private sector who is going to come to Ontario to build a nuclear plant at the cost of electricity we've got today, unless you do one of two things: You raise the price of electricity to the point of making it a good investment for them, or, conversely, you subsidize it.

That's what the Tories did, and I thought that was a dumb deal. They said, "We're going to fix Bruce nuclear, and the way to fix Bruce nuclear is quite simply to sign a long-term agreement"—I think it's 18 years—"with a private sector consortium that came from Britain in order to run Bruce nuclear. We, the province of Ontario, which has paid for the entire capital construction cost of Bruce nuclear, won't make them pay for that. We'll just get them to pay us for part of that and then they're going to run it for 18 years, and at the end of 18 years, all decommissioning costs will fall to the taxpayer." Who wouldn't jump at that deal if you had the money? What a sweet deal. The public sector builds it, we sell it for 10

cents on the dollar to the private sector and they run it for 18 years. Of course they can make money because it's entirely subsidized by the taxpayer to the tune of probably around 80% to 90%. Then we take the entire decommissioning cost. You don't have to be a nuclear scientist to figure this one out. Decommissioning costs of a nuclear plant are just as expensive as the construction of one. Why would we do that?

Mr Manley comes back and basically says to us that the way to solve Ontario's energy problems is not only to rebuild the reactors that we now have at Pickering and Darlington—and we know how expensive that was for the ones they tried to build. It was supposed to be how much? Some \$1 billion or \$1.5 billion was supposed to be the cost to retube Pickering A; it ended up being \$3 billion. They were way over cost. So we already know our experience as little as three years ago. They have not been able to contain the cost of retubing existing reactors. But Mr Manley comes forward and says, "I think the answer is to retube the ones we've got, rebuild them." We know that's going to be a huge amount of money. Not only are we going to rebuild the ones we have, we're going to build new ones. So \$30 billion to \$40 billion is what is being proposed as the public sector investment to build Darlington, Pickering and new nukes in the province of Ontario. It doesn't make any sense.

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The only way the private sector is ever going to get into that game is if we subsidize them and that's basically what the government is saying it's prepared to do. I'm saying I don't think we should spend \$30 billion to \$40 billion on this particular project. If we've got \$30 billion or \$40 billion to spend on energy in the province of Ontario, imagine what we can do with other projects that are far greener and far more sustainable over the longer period than a nuclear plant. A nuclear plant is about 20 to 25 years. Then you have to spend a whole bunch of money to retube the reactor. At least if we said we're going to go out and take a look at existing hydroelectric power in the province of Ontario, maybe it's a question of rebuilding some of the dams we have now, like at Niagara or on the Mattagami River or on the Abitibi or others, where we're able to redo the generators that we have now in order to produce more electricity. It's very doable. In fact, there are a lot of First Nations people up in my area who would love the opportunity to get involved in that. To the north, the Moose Cree along with Fort Albany and others are interested in doing a project on the Mattagami River because they understand there will be some economic benefit for them. So why don't we look at that?

Imagine \$30 billion. It wouldn't come close to \$30 billion. It wouldn't even come close to \$1 billion to be able to generate some electricity. Imagine if we were to invest some of that \$30 billion to \$40 billion in alternative energy sources. Look at Denmark. I think 10% of their total generating stock is now generated by wind turbines; 10% is pretty huge when you think about it. The real spin-off for Denmark is that they've developed an



industry in Denmark. They're now in the position where they manufacture some of the best wind generators in Europe and they're in the position now to export that particular equipment to other parts of the world. So people around the world are looking at what Denmark is doing and saying, "Hey, I wouldn't mind buying some of those particular wind turbines." They've created a whole industry: R&D, engineering, construction, installation, monitoring, repairing all of those particular generating facilities. Imagine what we can do there.

Look at run-of-the-river projects where you're able to take advantage of the currents in a river without having to build a dam. There's all kinds of technology to be developed in that, not to say what we could do in conservation. Imagine if the province of Ontario said we want to become the North American—let's be bold; the world—leader when it comes to energy conservation so that we come forward with new devices by which we're able to save on the consumption of electricity that people have to use—everything from better appliances in our homes to better equipment in our industry. There's all kinds of stuff that we can do with \$30 billion to \$40 billion that would have a net economic spin-off that would be far more positive in our economy than what is purported by building nukes.

I just say to the government, beware, we've been down this road before. We did it when we built Darlington. It was way over cost. We told you at the time—Stephen Lewis, the then-leader of the New Democratic Party, stood in this House and said, "Be careful. You're going to build that thing and it's going to end up costing you far more money than you can afford." As a result, we have a huge deficit at Ontario Hydro—now at OPG—that we've had to pay because of the over cost in the building of Darlington. I say to the government, it's not a very sound policy.

I just come back to the original comment I was making, which is that you never promised to do this in the first place. I listened in the last election. I listened carefully to what the Conservatives and Liberals had to say in the last election. Nowhere did the Liberals ever say they were going to build nuclear power in the province of Ontario or retool Darlington and Bruce. In fact, they said quite the opposite. So I say the government broke a promise. They broke one of the most basic promises that you can make to the people of Ontario.

What's interesting is, not even the Conservatives ran on that. My good friend John Baird, the Minister of Energy at the time, understood politically how negatively it would be seen by Ontario voters in the election of 2003 if his party, the Conservative Party, ran on the building of new nuclear plants in the province of Ontario. They would have had a hard time even selling the retooling of existing plants because of what had happened to Pickering.

I say to the Liberals across the way, the reality is you're more bold than the Tories ever were. The Tories didn't want to go there. I say to the members across the way, I remember: on se promenait dans le comté de

Timmins-Baie James, je me rappelle très bien. On s'en va à Smooth Rock Falls, on s'en va à Kapuskasing, Opatatika, Moonbeam, Hearst, dans toutes ces communautés-là, et quand on cogne aux portes, une des grosses préoccupations pour la communauté francophone est l'éducation. On écoutait très clairement le discours qu'on avait à la porte avec les électeurs dans ces communautés. Par exemple, à Opatatika eux autres avaient passé à travers un épisode où ils ont bien proche fermé l'école, la seule école à Opatatika.

Donne un peu de crédit au ministère de l'Éducation dans le temps de M<sup>me</sup> Elizabeth Witmer, qui nous a donné 50 000 \$ pour garder cette école-là ouverte. On a fait tout notre ouvrage à la communauté pour nous assurer que l'argent était là pour la commission scolaire, et la commission scolaire a fait sa part. Mais le point que je fais est que, quand on parlait aux électeurs, ils nous disaient, « Écoute, l'éducation, c'est la clef. »

On a besoin de s'assurer que nos jeunes, et spécialement dans une communauté comme Opatatika, aient la meilleure éducation possible pour qu'eux autres soient capables d'apprendre, soient capables de se développer comme jeunes pour avoir un appétit pour l'éducation, afin de pouvoir se présenter éventuellement au postsecondaire, soit au collège ou à l'université pour devenir des citoyens de notre société avec une valeur ajoutée.

Je me rappelle ce débat, parce que je veux vous dire que j'ai gagné pour la première fois pour les néo-démocrates une histoire de néo-démocrates dans la communauté de Hearst. Hearst, d'habitude, est une communauté qui a voté libéral. J'ai toujours bien été là, mais je n'ai jamais gagné. Puis, un des enjeux qu'on avait dans cette communauté, je me rappelle bien, était la question de l'investissement dans l'éducation. Je me rappelle certains électeurs, quand je cognais aux portes, qui disaient, « Monsieur Bisson, on vous aime bien. Vous faites un bon ouvrage, mais les libéraux vont être le gouvernement. Eux autres vont investir, comme M. Rozanski a fait la recommandation que l'investissement nécessaire pour l'éducation va être fait. »

Moi, je disais à mes électeurs à Hearst, « Écoute, les libéraux dans une élection font toujours la même affaire. Ça se promène autour, ça fait des promesses qu'ils vont faire comme les néo-démocrates, mais une fois élus ils deviennent des conservateurs. Faites-moi confiance. Vous allez voir. » Et, chanceux pour moi, il y avait assez de personnes qui ont fait confiance à moi à Hearst. J'ai gagné non seulement le comté mais aussi la communauté de Hearst, et je leur suis très reconnaissant.

Mais ce qui est intéressant, ce que j'avais dit aux citoyens de Hearst est exactement ce qui est arrivé. Les citoyens de Hearst, je pense, commencent à voir. Justement je m'en allais là vendredi, samedi, et j'avais des appointments avec du monde de Hearst, aussi de Kap et de Smooth Rock Falls. Deux de ces appointments étaient sur la question de l'éducation. Puis le monde commence à réaliser, parce que je parlais justement à un électeur à Hearst qui a dit : « Écoute, Gilles, je n'ai pas

voté pour toi, je veux te le dire. Je pense que t'es un bon gars puis que tu travailles fort pour notre communauté. J'ai voté libéral, mais je commence d'être un peu inquiet.» Il m'a demandé, «Pourra-t-on se rencontrer»—c'est un enseignant à Hearst—«pour se parler un peu de ce qui se passe en éducation, parce que moi, je m'attendais à ce que le gouvernement soit pour faire les investissements en éducation tels qu'ils ont promis lors des élections, puis on n'en voit pas. Ça me préoccupe beaucoup.» J'ai dit : «Il n'y a pas de problème. On va se rencontrer.» Justement, on va se rencontrer samedi.

Ce qui est arrivé est exactement ça : le gouvernement n'a pas gardé son engagement vis-à-vis de l'investissement dans l'éducation qu'ils ont promis dans la dernière élection. Là, on se trouve dans une situation un peu drôle où le gouvernement à ce point-ci non seulement n'a pas gardé son engagement, mais on a le premier ministre, M. Dalton McGuinty, qui se promène autour en disant, «Il faut baisser nos attentes. Écoute, les attentes des électeurs, tout a changé depuis les élections. Il faut baisser vos attentes parce que nous autres, on veut être responsables. On veut travailler bien pour tous les citoyens de la province.»

Je ne rappelle pas ce discours-là avant les élections. Ce n'est pas cela qu'il a dit. Il a dit carrément qu'il était pour augmenter le financement de l'éducation; il n'a pas dit, «Baisser vos attentes.» Là, on attend. Il va avoir un budget au mois d'avril où le ministre des Finances, M. Sorbara, va bien donner l'engagement du gouvernement dans la prochaine année fiscale faisant affaire avec ce qu'ils vont investir dans l'éducation.

Je peux croire que, quand on regarde le document qui va être ici dans cette Assemblée au mois d'avril après le budget, vous n'allez voir la promesse électorale que les libéraux ont faite nulle part dedans, parce qu'à la fin de la journée c'est tel que j'ai dit tout à l'heure.

Mes amis libéraux, c'est du bon monde. Je ne veux pas dire que c'est du méchant monde. J'ai de bons amis dans le caucus libéral, comme M. Bartolucci et d'autres que je trouve sont des gens honorables. Mais il faut dire que ça parle comme les néo-démocrates durant une élection, et quand ça vient à gouverner, ils sont comme des conservateurs.

Je dis qu'on a besoin de se méfier de ce type d'approche-là. Je pense qu'une affaire que le monde veut avoir, c'est un gouvernement qui dit une affaire durant une élection et, une fois qu'ils sont élus, restent avec les engagements qu'ils ont faits.

1650

It has been a great pleasure in the 20 minutes that I've had to be able to speak to this particular throne speech. I just want to say again to my good friends in the Liberal caucus that this is not anything personally against you. I think you're all honourable members, like all members in this House. But I urge you to go to your caucus meeting tomorrow morning, Tuesday, and say to Dalton McGuinty and the rest of the cabinet: "Listen, you guys ran an election platform. You promised to fund Rozanski"—as Rozanski had indicated in his report—"and you

promised to bring back the 8,000 nurses. You promised not to do private hospitals, P3s. You promised not to go to private hydro but to stay within public. You never campaigned on building nuclear reactors. You promised to solve the auto insurance problem"—and the list goes on—"and you're breaking those promises."

I say to you now—because I know well, and I've been there; I was in the government caucus and I know how this goes—you're going to be marked for what you do in the first year in office. If you guys don't get control of your agenda soon and start keeping some of your commitments, it's going to be a one-term government. Believe me, I've been there. So, to my good friends across the way, I look forward to your comments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments.

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** Thank you, the member for Timmins-James Bay, for your comments regarding the throne speech, a throne speech that I was very proud of when it was presented here in the House, proud to have had the opportunity before Christmas, this past Christmas, to have as part of my maiden speech here in the House. I stand here today, proud to make further comments on that throne speech.

I have to say it frustrates me, probably just as much as it frustrated the member from Guelph-Wellington when on December 9 she stood up here referring to the debate on the throne speech. Here we are at this time, still working with this throne speech. As my honourable seat partner commented today, this should have been done, this should have been completed so we could move on.

We will keep our promises; we will. We are taking a fiscally responsible attitude, and we will continue to take a fiscally responsible attitude, to what we are doing here in the House.

Regarding the throne speech, a few comments: As a retired educator, I'd just like to say that with schools we've done many things to restore local democracy at the school board level. We have introduced and said that we will replace the unproductive teacher testing programs with new programs that will encourage teacher excellence, and that will be done. Educators have told me that they're proud we stood and made that very clear in this House, to help them as they worked to deliver the very best in education. I'm proud of that fact too, being a retired educator, that I can work with our government to do that. That's just one aspect. I imagine there will be other members speaking on different aspects of the throne speech.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I was watching the debate in my office, and I have to pay some respect to the member from Timmins-James Bay for his rather accurate portrayal of the turnabout with the current government and their promises being quite different during, before and after the election. I think his account of the issue facing them, certainly on the energy file, is most telling. I think his reference to Mr Manley as "the kissing cousin of the Premier" is a pretty accurate portrayal because, really, if you read Manley's report, he's pretty much following a course that had been set out for some time.



Just today, I was in the midst of reading an article from the Post by Theresa Tedesco. It outlines, I think quite accurately, some of the challenges. The real dilemma here, as was pointed out by the member from Timmins-James Bay, is not just the contradiction of their promises and their delivery. The unfreezing of the rate, I think there's some traction for that. I think even looking at our own policy, there was some recognition that the rates really did reflect for some time the amount of risk to the government going forward, but over a longer period of time it may have made sense, provided you had adequacy of supply. That was really the issue.

But in Theresa's report here, she says, "... the \$9-billion-plus Darlington nuclear plant. After much angst, the Liberals went ahead with the project"—this is back in 1990, when you faced the same question—"a smart move considering that the much-maligned plant is the undisputed workhouse of the province's nuclear energy supply." Of course, that Darlington plant is in my riding. But the dilemma that I put to those viewing today is this: If the government of Ontario—that is, the people of Ontario—is going to be the only shareholder, who is going to speak for the shareholder?

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** It's always a pleasure to listen to my colleague the member from Timmins-James Bay, because we know that members from northern Ontario face a number of unique challenges due to geography and certainly different economic situations up there. I'm pleased we have a Minister of Northern Development and Mines who has taken the task on very seriously, a man who's going to be doing a great job in northern Ontario. I have full confidence, after four years, that this minister is going to change the face of northern Ontario and that the member from Timmins-James Bay will be very pleased and very supportive of some of the initiatives.

But my friend talks about Ontario Hydro, and I want to talk about it with the NDP legacy on Ontario Hydro. We all remember when they were buying rain forests down in Costa Rica. That was a wonderful investment of public funds from the province of Ontario—rain forests in Costa Rica.

We also know that when they were in power, the former Liberal government—David Peterson—had negotiated a deal with the province of Manitoba called the Manitoba lifeline. The government of the day, the Liberal government, had it all set out that in the early 1990s—when the NDP came to power—that lifeline would be in place to provide additional electricity in Ontario. Lo and behold, the NDP came to power and cancelled the Manitoba lifeline deal. Just think if we had that power today within our grid system that the NDP had quickly abandoned. That was a serious mistake that they made, and the province of Ontario is still paying for that.

But we look to the future. My colleague from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh outlaid the Liberal plan, I think, in our throne speech. It's going to be an opportunity over four years. We'll meet all our commit-

ments in our election platform, and that will change the face of Ontario in a very positive way.

We've already started. During the short time between the government being sworn in and the Christmas recess, we moved on a number of significant things. We took money and invested it back into the education system. It's all very positive.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member from Timmins-James Bay has two minutes.

**Mr Bisson:** First of all, I've got to put my glasses on now. I can't see without these things.

The member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh says, "You know, we Liberals are going to be fiscally responsible." Where was the fiscal responsibility when you drafted up your campaign platform? We, as New Democrats, said, Conservatives said and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, along with the C.D. Howe Institute, that what you had inside your election platform was unfundable, that the way you had it set up, you had not balanced your commitments in the platform and that in fact you couldn't deliver on them. That was the point we were trying to make in the election. So talk to me now about you being fiscally responsible? Where were you when you drafted up the platform? It wasn't there. You guys basically couldn't make the numbers add up.

To the member from Scarborough Southwest, I just say, listen, you've got to go to that caucus meeting tomorrow morning and you've got to say, "Cabinet, Premier, we've got to keep our commitments. If we don't, we're going to get turfed out." The only thing you've got to get re-elected with is what this government does, because you're not going to do it on your own. I hate to tell you, once you're elected in this place—look at the stats—most people elected in the first term don't come back. The only way you come back is by way of another sweep, and if you keep on going the way you are now, you're going to get swept out.

So I'm saying, just a little word of advice, because I like my Liberal friends. I want to get to know them a little bit better—not too well, just for Peter to know.

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** Quit sucking up.

**Mr Bisson:** All right, I won't suck up any more.

But I just say to my friends across the way, you've got to go inside that Liberal caucus meeting tomorrow and you've got to say, "Premier, keep your commitments. We ran on a number of campaign promises. People said they wanted us to do them. They voted for us. We sounded like New Democrats in the last election. By God, it's about time we act like them once we get elected."

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

1700

**Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce):** It is a privilege to address the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I will be sharing my time with the honourable member from Perth-Middlesex.

The people of our province look to us for leadership and direction. I am pleased to be a part—

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You have to stop the clock on my point of order, please, to

help my friend out. I need a ruling from you. I was told earlier by the Speaker of the House that I wasn't allowed to hold up a document in front of the Legislature, and this—

**The Deputy Speaker:** You don't have a point of order. Please take your seat. You don't have a point of order. Could you please continue.

**Mrs Mitchell:** I am pleased to be a part of a government which is meeting the challenge. Huron-Bruce is a rural riding and agriculture is the major contributor to our economy. The single case of BSE in Alberta has hit our farmers, truckers, implement dealers and all the economy very hard. It has placed great stress on our social fabric.

We have moved decisively with the federal government on the crisis. The complete solution, however, does not lie in our hands. It is up to the government of the United States to open the border and to recognize that we have a secure livestock business.

Huron and Bruce have provided leadership in the past. Jack Riddell was Minister of Agriculture for four years. His strong voice for agriculture was heard throughout the province, and it came from a lifetime experience in agriculture. He actively represented the farmers and the people of Huron county.

Murray Gaunt was a long-serving member who still works on behalf of agriculture. He was the voice of agriculture on CKNX radio for decades. His work for the Ontario heritage agriculture museum is most notable.

Murray Elston was another MPP who served the people of Huron-Bruce as Minister of Health and Chair of Management Board. He certainly demonstrated leadership, and he continues to work for the people of Ontario in his new capacity as president of the Canadian Nuclear Association. He will provide needed insight into the search for solutions to our energy shortage.

My two immediate predecessors worked for agriculture in our province: Paul Klopp as parliamentary assistant and Helen Johns as minister. Helen served Premier Eves in many other capacities.

Agriculture is our major industry, but the Bruce nuclear plant near Kincardine is meeting Ontario's energy needs. Fifteen per cent of Ontario's needs are supplied by Bruce Power. The management of Bruce Power has shown confidence in Ontario by proposing to expand its facility in Bruce county.

During the recess, the Minister of Energy toured the plant to experience first hand Bruce Power's commitment to our nuclear industry. A reliable and stable source of electricity is essential, and Bruce Power employs 3,000 highly skilled people. The ownership is unique. It's a partnership which includes the Ontario municipal employees retirement system, the Power Workers' Union, the Society of Energy Professionals, Cameco Corp and TransCanada Corp.

My roots are firmly in rural Ontario. I was born in Goderich township and have lived all of my life in Huron-Bruce. I know the difficulties and rewards of owning and running one's own business. I had stores in Clinton and Bayfield for over a decade. I left retailing to enter politics in the town of Clinton.

Main Street is hurting. When farmers are successful, the retailers on Main Street benefit. The BSE crisis has compounded the problems facing retailing in rural Ontario. It has created many more empty storefronts. Big-box stores, plus the Internet, have created a threat to the survival of our Main Streets. And it's more than money that is leaving our communities. It often diminishes local support and leadership, which the small retailer provides.

Prior to my election in October, I was in municipal politics for over 11 years. I served as warden for Huron county for two terms. During those two terms, I dealt with the downloading by the province. It has brought municipal government into new areas of service delivery, such as ambulance and water quality. It was the municipal governments which first faced the problems which large livestock operations created. Liquid manure and its impact on the environment became an issue which local township councils had to deal with. It was in Huron county that the first bylaw which introduced the concept of nutrient management was passed. The council of the township of Grey in Huron county passed its first bylaw in 1996. After that, townships like Ashfield went on to refine the bylaw. The impediment which the township councils faced remained, and that was enforcement.

I am very pleased to be a part of a government that acts. Legislation without regulation is pointless. Under the leadership of the Minister of Agriculture, the Nutrient Management Act, with regulations, was passed in our first session. The uncertainty which farmers faced, plus the feeling of helplessness which the township councils faced, has been ended.

Water and food safety is of paramount importance. Watershed source protection is the next step. This government has embarked on a consultation process on water source protection. We are working with our partners in municipal government and the conservation authorities to ensure safe drinking water. The public demands safe food, and agriculture, to be successful, must have the public's confidence. This government, on assuming office, took immediate steps to reaffirm the public's confidence in the meat inspection system. Mr Justice Roland Haines of the Superior Court of Justice is conducting an inquiry into meat regulation and inspections.

I am pleased to be a part of a government which moved swiftly to ensure proper meat inspection. The immediate hiring of 118 full-time meat inspectors not only reassures the public but also underlines the fact that Ontario's food products are safe. Our farmers depend on their reputation as producers of safe and nutritious food.

The provinces have spent a great deal of time negotiating with the federal department of agriculture's support program. Again, I am pleased that this government has acted decisively. Ontario has signed the agricultural policy framework.

Agriculture and energy are areas where Huron-Bruce leads, but we do know how to relax in Huron and Bruce. We possess a long stretch of sandy beaches on Lake Huron. Our small towns offer live theatre for evening



entertainment. Farm tours, hiking, hunting and fishing, and boating are all very memorable holidays which one can experience in Huron and Bruce counties. Tourism has become a growing part of our economy, and people who vacation here often retire here. The percentage of seniors living in the riding is higher than the Canadian average. We have a great place for people who want to get out of the fast lane, and it's a wonderful place for a holiday and to retire.

Health care is a major concern for our older residents. People want a fully funded public health care system. In Huron-Bruce, the health care system has been under a great deal of stress for the last 10 years. New demands and new technology have shown us that we cannot continue as in the past. Our system must serve the needs of our citizens. It is not enough to just merely shuffle the players. It is not enough to keep putting money into the system. Our whole philosophy of health care must be re-examined.

In Huron-Bruce, we are some distance from large hospitals. Our small population is spread over a very large geographic area. Time and distance can be our enemies. Partnerships certainly have been formed to provide modern services most efficiently.

It is a challenge to attract and keep health care workers. We do have a wonderful lifestyle and great scenery, but often that is not enough to attract young professionals. A great deal of time and energy is spent recruiting and not focusing on resolving health care issues.

1710

I am pleased to be part of a government that will maintain our publicly funded, fully accessible health care system. Our legacy, the measure of the Legislature's success, will be resolved by our commitment to health care.

The education system is the factor that makes Ontario competitive, and to compete globally we must have a well-educated workforce. I know about the state of the education system. As the mother of two daughters, I know the crisis that has engulfed the education system in Ontario. In Huron-Bruce the cost of busing is a major expense for our school boards. Our young people are our most valued asset, and it's up to us to see that our children receive an education that meets their ability.

We face many challenges. Let's be up to the task of meeting them. It's a privilege to be a member of the Legislature and to speak today. Thank you.

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** First, I'd like to commend my friend the member for Huron-Bruce on her maiden speech. With adjoining ridings, we share a bond of geography, and today we share a bond of history as we rise to share with members our pride in our ridings and what has motivated us to seek to represent our constituents.

As I begin, I want to thank the good people of Perth-Middlesex for entrusting me to be their voice in this place for the next four years. Perth-Middlesex is the largest riding in the beautiful southwest of Ontario,

encompassing all of Perth county and the vast majority of Middlesex county, which lies west, north and east of the great city of London. My riding is blessed with an abundance of fine soil and good farmers. By far the largest industry is agri-food, the second largest industry in Ontario—a fact often forgotten. The automotive manufacturing sector is the second driver of the local economy. And I'd be remiss if I did not shamelessly promote the Stratford Festival, now in its 52nd season. A few blocks from my house is the finest repertory theatre in North America and one of the three leading theatres of Shakespeare in the world. Thus, tourism is the third key component of what generates economic wealth for my constituents.

I have an abiding love of democracy, and I recall the night in November of 1998 when I stood before over a thousand fellow Liberals and addressed them at my first nomination meeting. I said that night, "Friends, isn't democracy a wonderful thing, that we can all freely join a political party, attend this meeting unencumbered, listen to candidates offering different talents and cast a secret ballot as our part of a fair election?" Most people in the world do not enjoy such liberty. Indeed, isn't democracy a wonderful thing? A short six months later, while conceding to my political predecessor on the evening of June 3, 1999, I opened my concession speech with that same line, "Friends, isn't democracy a wonderful thing?" I truly believe in the wonders of democracy, whether as the victor or the vanquished, though I can report that victory is much sweeter.

To be the sole occupant of this seat in this beautiful chamber is due to the help and encouragement of so many people. I want to acknowledge my parents, Joan and Wilf Wilkinson. As luck would have it, they are here today in the members' gallery. I tell people that it was my father who told me what to fight for and who to fight, but it was my mother who taught me how to fight, which is to win.

I grew up in the wonderful town of Trenton, within a loving family, surrounded by my three brothers, Bill, Peter and Stephen. The four Wilkinson boys learned a lesson from our parents that has marked us all of our lives. It is the simple belief that if you have been blessed, you must be thankful and share your God-given talents with your community. In regard to politics, I have a special bond with my brother Peter. He too is here at Queen's Park, serving as chief of staff to our remarkable Minister of Finance, the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora. If the truth be told, even on our darkest days there is nowhere else my brother and I would rather be.

The little-known secret of each and every member is the steep price that our immediate families pay for us to take our seats here. Though my wife and I have decided as a couple to keep our family life separate from my political life, today is an exceptional day and I want to say thank you in public to Loretta, Alexandra, Liam and Breen for their love and understanding of my exquisite political obsession.

We all know that to be here is the result of countless hours of volunteer labour, coupled with the generous

donations of your supporters. No man is an island; no politician is one either. Rather, I liken an elected politician to the tree in the very middle of a forest, a forest of supporters. There are too many trees within my forest to mention each one, but each of you know how very grateful I am for always being there at my side as we journey together.

The other unsung supporter with whom I have the greatest of friendships is my business partner, Jeff Keller. Without the sacrifices that he has made on my behalf so I could pursue my political calling, I simply would not be here. In turn, without the hard work of the staff at our firm of Wilkinson and Keller, neither of us could live our dreams.

Each of us comes to this place with a motivation. For me, my first hint of a calling to the life of politics happened during the 1995 election. I watched the introduction of the politics of deliberate division into the province which I love. In my opinion, to serve as an MPP one is a public servant. To serve the public requires a willingness to serve all of the public, not just the parts that we are comfortable with. To practise the politics of division is to enter into an exercise of cynically picking enemies, to strategically gain friends for political advantage.

When I call the fire department, do the firefighters, among the bravest of our public servants, get to pick and choose whether to come to my house? No. They come. When a drunk arrives in the middle of the night at the hospital inebriated, belligerent and bellicose, do the doctors, the nurses and the hospital workers, those most noble of our public servants, get to pick and choose whether to care for that individual? No. They treat him. Does a teacher, our most trusted public servant, get to pick and choose only the brightest and most well-adjusted students to teach? No. They teach all who enter into their classroom. So I say that neither should we as MPPs get to pick and choose which of our constituents we wish to serve. Our job is not about serving just the taxpayers or just those who share our political beliefs, but rather, we are called to serve each and every constituent. It has always struck me as reprehensible how a person can serve effectively in this hall of the people if they've been elected on the basis of picking one's enemies to choose one's friends.

This revulsion led me to seek the wise counsel of my brother Peter, the political brother in the family, for he had worked here at Queen's Park in the late 1980s. He introduced me to a man who would become my most trusted mentor. Sean Conway, who served with distinction for 28 years in this place, agreed to meet with me. I thought I wanted to become politically active as a campaign manager. It was Sean who planted the notion that I had the characteristics of a candidate for our party. There's no greater accolade that a person can bestow upon me than to compare me to the finest orator that this House has produced in the modern era. It was Sean who, in turn, introduced me to our newly minted leader, Dalton McGuinty. A moment in one's life can be truly fateful. I

can testify that this meeting was one of those moments. The man who would become Premier has that rare leadership quality to inspire others to join his cause. His honesty about the challenges of balancing one's family life and political life will always guide me in whatever I do here. If it were not for the warmth of Terri McGuinty, I do not think that my wife would have ever agreed to allow me to join her husband in our common obsession of public service.

I want to pay tribute to the members who went before me, but given that the time is short, in closing, I wish to commend to Hansard what I said that evening in November of 1998. It sums up what I, and those who voted for me, hold to be most true. There is an alternative to a world of political extremism. We will share with our neighbours the simple truth that the world is neither black nor white. Rather, we know the world is full of colours, that we are all a lot closer to the centre than to the extreme. We are not about convincing people to look either left or right, but to look up. We have followed a bright Rhodes scholar down the path to the left and we have followed a golf pro down the path to the right. I say we must instead follow an honest and decent family man down the road we used to travel together, the road down the middle of the path where most people want to be. Why? Because on that road no one asks whether you belong to a union or own a business, whether you're a man or a woman. No one notices the colour of your skin or where you worship. People do not deny you passage on this road, no matter what your sexual orientation or whether you are able-bodied or not. Young or old, healthy or sick, all are invited to travel this road together. Yes, we must work to maintain that road, to keep it safe, to carry those who fall behind due to poor health and to teach our children the lessons they need to learn along the road.

1720

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr O'Toole:** It's an honour to stand and recognize the two members from the government party: the member for Huron-Bruce, who replaced Helen Johns who also served this place well in her time, as well as the member for Perth-Middlesex, who replaced Bert Johnson who also served this place well. I believe they both served their communities well, as I expect the new members will.

I have to rise on this occasion, because the member from Perth-Middlesex mentioned in passing the Shakespearean theatre in Stratford, and tends to portray himself as somewhat of an actor. Certainly I would agree with him in that description. But to compare himself to Sean Conway is just absurd. I'm quite affronted that Sean would give you any reason to believe that. In all good sense, really, I find it striking common that all of us who come to represent our ridings come with a variety of experiences, but also with a great passion and love for public service in the communities we represent.

So I commend both members for bringing a form of eloquence to this place, as well as participating in what I



guess we'd refer to as their maiden speeches. It does bring back memories of my own maiden speech, which was on much similar sentiments.

The member from Perth-Middlesex—I listened quite astutely—mentioned the road ahead, which happens to have been the name of our election document. I would prefer to think that your position on an election platform document would be the road not taken: two roads diverging in the woods and you chose the road not taken. In fact it's called the road of broken promises, as our member Garfield Dunlop has often said.

To end on a positive note, I commend both members. I wish them well in serving their constituents from the backbenches, where they're well placed.

**Mr Bisson:** I want to commend the two members from the government caucus on their maiden speeches. I thought they were kind of interesting and good to listen to.

I say to the member for Perth-Middlesex that he makes himself out to be a bit of an actor because he comes from Perth-Middlesex, the home of Stratford. I know, because I come from Timmins. I saw that member, I saw him well. He was at Cedar Meadows, if I remember correctly, at committee time. I saw him, as Mr Colle—I forget your riding name—and others saw. This man has talent. He can sing for his supper. I saw him sing.

**Interjection:** He's not as good a singer as O'Toole.

**Mr Bisson:** He's not as good a singer as O'Toole. That I didn't know. He whistles. We'll get there later.

The member from Perth-Middlesex sang. I heard him, and others heard him that night at Cedar Meadows. I've got to say he's got a pretty good voice. We only hope you don't have to sing too often for your supper around here. This place can be very vicious every four years. I wish you well in your time here and that you don't have to sing for your supper any time soon.

I say to the members, all kidding aside, that it is indeed an honour the first time you stand in this place, and I know this is not the first time, but this is your throne speech opportunity. This is a very prestigious place to be. It's a very small club. As we well know, there is a whole bunch of people from all parties, and some independents, who would give their left arm to be in this Legislature today. For those of us lucky enough to get here, never mind once but a couple more times after, we realize how truly lucky we are. If we remember your comment in your speech at the very beginning, I think they are good words of wisdom for all members: At the end of the day, this place is about the public and about being able to serve the people who have elected us to be here. No matter if you're a New Democrat, a Liberal or a Conservative, we all do that with honour and we all do that with respect to the voters.

**Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** I'd like to congratulate my colleagues from Huron-Bruce and Perth-Middlesex on their wonderful maiden speeches—very inspiring stuff. I have an affinity for both of these ridings, as I drive through one to get to the other, where I have a home. As Ms Mitchell said, I, too, hope to retire there one day, if indeed I have retirement to look forward to.

I want to return to the remarks of our colleagues from the other parties, the big question of why, in less than five months, we have not fulfilled all our goals and all our promises. Well, you can all mouth this and say it along with me, because you have all heard it so many times now: We have a \$5.6-billion deficit, courtesy of our predecessors. I don't remember the Tories campaigning on that little tidbit. I don't recall that during the September election campaign.

What's even worse than that is the state of our public services at this point. We are in a situation where we have inefficient, expensive, cumbersome structures that we've been locked into, that we now have to creatively get ourselves out of in order to get ourselves out of this financial mess and start fulfilling our promises and our goals, which we will do.

It's going to take one of two things: It will take a lot of money to do it or a lot of time. We don't have a lot of money—we don't have much money at all, again thanks to our predecessors—but we have time. The people of Ontario understand that it will take time. They're very reasonable about that. The only people who don't understand that are people who are trying to score a cheap headline.

We will do it because it must be done. We will end the spend-deficit-cut cycle that plagues governments in many parts of the world, this one included. We will create and build sustainable, reliable public services delivered by an accountable government. We will do it because it must be done, because it's the right thing to do.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I rise to congratulate as well the members from Huron-Bruce and Perth-Middlesex on their maiden speeches. It has been some time—in fact, 1995, a long time ago—since I made mine here and much has happened since. This is a very different province. Speaker, you will recall in 1995 businesses were leaving Ontario. This place was collapsing. There were the highest rates of unemployment ever in the history of this province. People knew that serious, fundamental changes had to be brought to this province. I was pleased, and still am very proud, to have been part of the government that brought those fundamental changes to this province that put us back into a position of leading the Canadian economy and restoring jobs—over a million new jobs created over that period of time.

I listen with interest now to my colleagues in the House. I wish them well. I know they are well-intentioned, and they come here, as we all do, to serve the public. I listened to my good friend from Perth-Middlesex refer to that path, that road, that middle of the road that the Liberals supposedly are now on. Unfortunately, his leader is stumbling all over that road. It was clearly set out in an election platform. However, obviously they have lost the map, because they have not arrived at one destination that they intended to get to. What we have to do now as members of the opposition is hold their feet to the fire. I'm hopeful that they will at least be able to find one destination on that road map. The time will come, however, in three and a half years,

when the people of this province, I believe, will say, "No, thank you, we don't want the road less travelled; we want the road we know will take us where we need to go."

Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to welcome these folks to this place, and I look forward to working with them in the next three and a half years.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Perth-Middlesex has two minutes in summary.

**Mr Wilkinson:** On behalf of my colleague the member from Huron-Bruce, I want to thank the members who commented on our maiden speeches, particularly the members for Durham and Timmins-James Bay, both of whom I serve with on the finance committee; my fellow caucus mate the member for Stoney Creek; and also the member for Oak Ridges, the member of my niece, who started today. With all due respect, I can hardly agree with the member for Oak Ridges. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to actually see you in opposition. I just want you to know that.

I was surprised that the member for Durham—I didn't know he could sing—took my comments to mean that somehow our party had lost its way. I want to reiterate that the vast majority of the people in Ontario want a government that sees itself going down the middle of the road and not being mired in the ditches.

1730

I found it fascinating when I was going around this province with the finance committee to discover from an accounting point of view—because I'm a certified financial planner—that we have never really run a true surplus in this province; that we had debts at the hospitals, debts at the children's aid society, debts at the school boards; that we had infrastructure deficits at our colleges, our universities, at our schools. There was just a lot of accounting to move that debt out, because we had a law that says we can't run a debt. We just shove it around and give it to everybody else so they can borrow that money at higher interest rates. My God, how crazy is that from a fiscal point of view?

I just want to say again on behalf of my colleague the member from Huron-Bruce that we are very happy to be here to serve in our government and to serve our leader and his unerring sense of where we're going as a province. We're all going to get there together. Some may take a little bit longer to get there than others, but we down the centre are moving forward.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** First, I'd like to take a moment to welcome all the members back to the new session of this Parliament. I hope they spent the winter productively, touring their ridings and this province, finding out what the people in this province want of this government and of this House.

I'd also like to congratulate the new leader of the new Conservative Party, Mr Stephen Harper, who was successful on the weekend in becoming the first leader of the new Conservative Party. I'm looking forward to the next federal election campaign, when we can hold the

Liberal government in Ottawa accountable for the mess they're creating in this country.

We want to speak on the throne speech today. We heard the Premier speak today about—what did he title it?—Real Positive Change Gains Momentum. In their election platform they talked about "Choose change." Then their throne speech was supposed to resemble that platform. Well, it didn't resemble that platform in too many ways. The actual bills they've brought forth don't even resemble the throne speech. I don't know where we're going to get to in the next session, but time will tell.

The honourable member from Timmins-James Bay was admonished for holding up what was considered to be a prop today, which was a part of the Liberals' election platform. I didn't get a real close look at that, but I think instead of saying "choose change," maybe what that platform should say is "loose change," because that's all that's going to be left in the pockets of the taxpayers of this province when this government is done with them. As a matter of fact, I recall a constituent of mine saying to me, "John, I voted Liberal. I've always voted Liberal, I didn't vote for you, but I've got to tell you, I am so angry with this government. The only thing McGuinty is going to leave in my pockets is lint."

We have seen evidence of it all over the place. They promised no tax increases; we've got tax increases. Now we've got tax increases on top of tax increases. Now they're going to the municipalities, saying, "We're going to lift the freeze on business taxes." Do you know what an increase on business taxes is going to do to small business in this province? I know what it's going to do to small business in my riding. It's a burden they simply can't bear at this time.

This government doesn't seem to care what goes on in rural Ontario. Do you know that when the Lieutenant Governor read that throne speech, the word "deficit" was mentioned 12 times? The word "rural" was not mentioned once. As a rural member, I am appalled at the lack of focus of this government on rural issues in this province. We've already seen examples of their willingness to ignore rural issues. I see it in my riding all the time. We've got situations in my riding with respect to sawmills, for example, that are being attacked by the Ministry of the Environment because they've got a pile of sawdust on their property. The Ministry of the Environment, with their consultants and engineers and all kinds of people with letters behind their names that I don't even know, comes up to these sawmill operators and says, "That pile of sawdust is an environmental hazard. You've got to drill these test wells. It could cost you. You've got to get a consultant in, you've got to drill these test wells and do some testing. It could cost you \$50,000; it could cost you \$70,000." This sawdust pile might have been sitting in that yard for 80 to 90 years, yet the ministry is going in there, saying, "You've got to prove to us that you don't have a problem."

This is what's happening in rural Ontario, and right now it's happening only in my riding, Renfrew-



Nipissing-Pembroke. I've got sawmill operators who are considering cessation of business because they simply can't afford to deal with these kinds of expenses. I've raised this matter with the Minister of the Environment on at least four occasions. I must say, she has not even acknowledged a single letter of mine on that subject, and I find that deplorable.

Now, getting back to the government—we'll get off sawmills for a moment, but we will come back to it—and their deficit, they go on and on and on about this deficit. They've inflated the deficit, they've relied on new numbers, everything they can do to change the numbers. Inflating the deficit—we just saw an example of how this government inflates. Instead of bringing a business envelope into the House today, they brought one that could hold the plans for my house. That's how this government inflates. They inflate envelopes, they inflate the deficit. I don't know what's coming from them next.

I want to talk about some other issues in my riding. Not only do we have the sawmill issue, but we have infrastructure issues: small municipalities that have been given provincially mandated orders to upgrade their water treatment plants.

**Mr Bisson:** Who did that?

**Mr Yakabuski:** I wasn't here, Mister. To the honourable member from James Bay, I wasn't here, but I can tell you there was a plan to fund those things. Now what's happening is that these upgrades are running over budget, and the government is not offering financial assistance to those municipalities that are in need of extra funding to continue with these or to pay for upgrades that have already been done. The municipalities have done it on their own ticket and have gone into debt to do so.

I can talk about the municipality of Laurentian Hills for one, a very small municipality with only a couple of thousand residents. They're left with a bill in the neighbourhood of \$700,000 to handle on their own at this point. They simply don't have the wherewithal to do it.

The town of Renfrew's estimates for their water treatment plant went from originally in the \$3-million to \$4-million range to up to \$10 million. They're simply not able to handle that additional burden.

This government had all kinds of promises. It went to the people in this province and convinced them that it was going to be able to deliver everything and make everybody happy. It has failed in almost every regard to keep those promises. It campaigned on no new taxes, "We will not raise your taxes." We've seen those taxes rise, and we're seeing them rise more. We're reaching a situation in this province where it's going to be back like those dark days between 1990 and 1995, when jobs were leaving the province because people couldn't afford to do business in this province.

The overall tax burden in this province, in spite of what this government would have you believe, is far too high. The federal government even understands that, that if we're going to remain competitive globally, we have to reduce those taxes. So what is their answer? The finance minister goes to Ottawa and says, "Well, we're going to allow you to raise the municipal taxes on business."

Business already pays more than its fair share of the municipal taxes in this province. Small businesses and ma-and-pa operations can't afford to be saddled with those additional tax burdens that this government is loading on them at this time.

1740

Let's talk about another issue here where the government clearly doesn't recognize the needs and the problems in rural Ontario. We'll talk about the spring bear hunt. The current Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines campaigned on seeing that bear hunt reinstated.

**Mr Bisson:** Yes, I remember.

**Mr Yakabuski:** Oh, yes. Then they talk about how this government shows that it cares about rural people, and cares about the north because we've got two northern ministers in cabinet. But they're toothless tigers—

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** You guys had sheep in there.

**Mr Yakabuski:**—because everything they want, the government pays no attention to them. Does the government listen to its own Minister of Natural Resources? Does the government listen to its own minister? No. "Out with the spring bear hunt. We're not going to reinstate it." But we've got problems with bears in Renfrew county.

Would the member from Eglinton come up to my county in the fall and sleep out in my backyard if he's not afraid of the bears? We've got problems. And what is the minister's answer? "Oh, we're going to put in a toll-free number." Well, I hope when you've got your cell phone in a no-service area and that bear is in your backyard, you can get a hold of that toll-free number. That's not going to be much of an answer when a bear is chasing you down the path.

What we're seeing increasingly is that this government, with eight cabinet ministers from the GTA, is controlled by Toronto.

**Mr Colle:** That's not true. It's Mississauga that controls it.

**Mr Yakabuski:** Yes, I am sad to say, that's the truth. It's controlled by Toronto. So my poor residents up in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, like the reeve of Madawaska Valley, John Hildebrandt, who recently had a fellow from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Dr Terry Quinney, speak to them about the spring bear hunt and how the justification for not reinstating it simply isn't there and that the ministry did not even read its own reports—but because they're not listening to the rural people and they're not listening to their own Minister of Natural Resources and Minister of Northern Development and Mines, they don't want the spring bear hunt. They won't bring it back, because Toronto doesn't want it. Toronto doesn't have a bear problem, but we have one in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

**Mr Leal:** Mike cancelled it. Wasn't he a bear hunter?

**Mr Yakabuski:** I don't recall that. The member from Peterborough seems to have a better grasp of the Legislature. Was he here then? I don't know. I wasn't here.

That's what government is all about—

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** There are too many bears in here, so just simmer down a little bit.

**Mr Yakabuski:** —and when something isn't right, it's got to be changed.

We talked about sawmills; now let's talk about nutrient management, on which I heard the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture speak earlier, about how it's such a great thing, this nutrient management legislation. But her ministry turned it over to the environment ministry. Well, you hand something like nutrient management over to the environment ministry and they're just going to be out there looking to nail somebody, because that's what they do. Our poor farmers, in the wake of BSE, can't afford to be implementing nutrient management plans up in Renfrew county or in any other rural county at this time. But this government stands up there because it wants to make sure that the headlines in Toronto are favourable to them: "Oh, we're going to make sure that Ontarians have the cleanest drinking water in the world." We already have that, but now we're going to spend billions of dollars to put rural people out of business, rural farmers out of business and rural small business people out of business. That's what we're going to do with overregulation.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Yakabuski:** Have you been to South Carolina?

**Mr Leal:** You and I were down there the same week. I didn't bump into you, though.

**Mr Yakabuski:** No, I didn't. You were on the fairway.

So what are we going to do with nutrient management? The government says, "We're not going to force it on you until we can assist you with the funding." Well, we need better criteria, we need clearer direction than that. That leaves the farm community with too many open, unanswered questions.

So we need to know what's going to happen with nutrient management. It was a terrible thing this government did to the farmers of this province, to hand that file back to the Ministry of the Environment. When our party was the government, it recognized the concerns of farmers and it gave that file to the agriculture ministry because it understands farmers.

This new government campaigned on continuing with the hydro rates capped at 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. It broke that promise. It's a litany of broken promises. That's all we're going to get from this government.

**Mr Leal:** Did you read the O'Connor report? Did you miss the O'Connor report, John?

**Mr Yakabuski:** I can't speak to you right now, Jeff. I'm on the clock.

I raised the issue in this House some time ago about septage spreading, and the minister jumped up and was so proud that she was going to ban the spreading of septage on fields immediately.

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** What's septage?

**Mr Yakabuski:** You'll have to ask the honourable member from Peterborough. He knows everything.

You were going to ban that immediately. Now we don't have a timetable. I've got a press release from the warden of Renfrew county here, wanting to know just when we can expect it. The county warden, Bob Sweet, says he wants the province to treat rural ratepayers fairly. Now he can't seem to get any answers from the ministry as to when we can expect these changes to be implemented. It's just vague responses: "Well, you know, maybe here, maybe now, maybe then, maybe never." We need to be able to plan in rural Ontario when legislation that affects us is going to be enacted.

It costs about \$700 to empty a septic tank and have that stuff hauled to a treatment facility. We don't have the facilities in rural Ontario to treat septage that is currently extracted from septic systems on people's property. In fact, there are about 27,000 homes in my riding alone that rely on a septic system to deal with their waste. So when governments enact legislation that affects a particular group more than others, the general principal is that the government is also going to be there to assist those stakeholders in the implementation and the carrying out of that new legislation. But they've offered no assistance. In fact, the minister almost scoffed when I suggested it, like we didn't know that it's currently the responsibility of homeowners to deal with their septage. Of course we know that. But we also know that when people get hit with a bill like that, there are going to be people finding ways of getting around that new legislation and dealing with it, perhaps, in ways they shouldn't. That is something of concern if we're trying to ensure that water is the paramount concern here.

**Mr O'Toole:** As he takes a drink.

**Mr Yakabuski:** Water, your honour, water.

This government is the first government in my memory, perhaps the first government since Confederation, that does not even have a minister responsible for rural affairs. It doesn't care enough about rural people in this province to even have a minister who holds the responsibility for rural affairs, and that, my friends, should be a real concern to every rural member, regardless of the side of the House they sit on, and to every citizen of a rural riding in this province.

1750

We recently got some changes to some MPAC regulations. The government was forced to make some changes, not because they were interested in rural concerns, but because the pressure brought to bear on them by rural people, rural stakeholders, campground owners and campground leaseholders in this province was too much for them to stand up to, but it was the people who forced the change on this government. Otherwise, on their own, we'd be seeing those tax changes still in place.

So I'm just wondering where we can expect this government to be down the road. It doesn't keep its promises. It goes in different directions. It talked about cancelling P3s. What do we have? We have basically a



P3 by another name at the Royal Ottawa Hospital and the William Osler Health Centre in Brampton.

I want to talk a little bit about some of this government's first forays into new bills. The health minister brought in Bill 8 back in the fall, and within a day he had to bring in Bill 31 because Bill 8 was so fundamentally mixed up and flawed that he needed a second bill just to get it to the committee stage. Even at the committee stage this Bill 8 is so full of holes and so full of weaknesses that it's just being ravaged by the stakeholders in this province.

I have a letter here from the Arnprior and District Memorial Hospital wondering where this government is going with Bill 8 with respect to hospital boards. One of the most important things about hospital boards is that they bring volunteers and they bring the ability to raise funds in small communities. This government wants to render those boards irrelevant. That is something that is going to hurt rural hospitals tremendously. This party is not going to stand here and allow it to happen.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

Questions and comments?

**Mr Bisson:** I've got to say it has to be tough being a Conservative these days in this House. I listened to my good friend from Renfrew-Nipissing, whom I like a lot, actually—he's quite a decent fellow.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bisson:** On the bear hunt, I'm sorry, but I remember. You weren't here, but it was Mike Harris who cancelled it. Bad enough that the Liberals didn't reverse it, but for you to criticize the Liberals on the bear hunt—my God, talk about toothless tigers.

Then, I'm listening to the good member—and this is a real big issue, and I agree with you—in regard to the new municipal water rates. Some of you who are newly elected, I would think you've all been contacted by your municipalities in regard to your water rates. Municipalities don't have the money to enact them. I want to remind you, toothless tiger over there, the bear with all the teeth, it was the Tories who did that, the Conservatives, you know. You guys brought in those regulations after Walkerton and then never funded the municipalities. But I might be wrong, because I distinctly heard the member, my good friend the member from Renfrew-Nipissing, say that the Tories had a funding plan to make sure municipalities got the money to put the regs in place. Now, I don't remember that. I hope you clarify that point in your response. I know municipalities across my riding, like Fauquier and Smooth Rock Falls—all of them—have been knocking at the door of the government for the last two years and no dollars have fallen from heaven.

I come back to the point that you must be pretty frustrated, as a Conservative, that the Liberals are having more political success than you did as a Conservative government moving forward an agenda that, quite frankly, is pretty right-wing. I understand your frustration, and my heart feels for you, but at the end of the day, hmm.

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** I listened to the comments from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke with a great deal of interest. I'd like to offer a few comments.

His comments on Bill 8 were really interesting because, having been somebody who hung around this Legislature a lot as a representative of school boards, one of the really frustrating things was the occasions on which a major piece of legislation would drop and nobody had any hearings. There was no attempt to consult. There was nothing we could do.

**Mr Tascona:** You were talking to me. We had a meeting.

**Mrs Sandals:** But did you listen?

We did things differently. Bill 8 was tabled. We have had weeks and weeks of hearings, and we listened to what the public said. That's what the public wants. It wants a government that listens. All of us who have constituency offices know that most of the calls that you get in your constituency office are from people with problems, people with complaints.

Do you know what happened in my constituency office last week? We got a call, totally voluntary, from somebody who was representing the nurses. Do you know what she wanted to say? She wanted to say thank you. This is the first time in eight and a half years that anybody has listened to nurses. This is the first time that anybody has—

**Mr O'Toole:** Oh, baloney. Where have they been? That's absolute bunk.

**Mrs Sandals:** I'm telling you what the nurses said. I didn't make this up. This is the first time that anybody has listened. That nurse didn't have to call, but she called and said, "Thank you for listening."

**Mr Murdoch:** I first want to tell you, Mr Speaker, is that I met many of your ratepayers in Cuba in the last couple of weeks and they were talking about you. I just wanted to mention that to you.

I also want to thank our speaker from Renfrew on bringing out many of the deficiencies that are happening with this Liberal government that we have today. Many of the promises that they've broken—I understand, and the member from Timmins mentioned how it's frustrating. It's not frustrating to be here. If there's any frustration, it's trying to see the next promise that the Liberals are going to break. That's frustrating. The member from Timmins talks about us being frustrated. Well, he was in that NDP government that put us in debt that we're still trying to get out of.

One of the things that is a problem is this fabricated \$5.6-billion deficit that the Liberals think they have. They've created this, if there's any deficit at all. They started about six months ago and did nothing to correct it. If they didn't correct it, I guess we will find out when the budget comes as to what they've done.

I'd like to talk a bit too about the bear hunt. Yes, it was Mike Harris who cancelled the bear hunt. Yes, I was upset about it, and yes, a lot of the members here were. It was wrong then, and it's wrong now.

This is what happens. The government can complain about things that we did wrong; they get to be the government, and then it's their job to change those things. Unfortunately, that's one of the things that the Liberals haven't changed. You had a chance to do it—even the minister wanted to do it—but here we're back again to this old type of governing from the Premier's office. We had that; certainly the NDP had that.

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** You had that?

**Mr Murdoch:** Yes, we did. I won't disagree with you there.

But I heard a government go out there day after day after day and say that this wouldn't happen with them. What happened? You got in to government and you're no better. You're doing the same thing. Everything's coming out of the Premier's office. He tells you when to jump, and you say, "How high, sir?" Same thing with the bear hunt. The minister wanted to change that, and you wouldn't let him.

**Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East):** I'm glad the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound brought up the bear hunt. We have a great bear out in Mississauga, and that bear is named Hazel McCallion. For eight straight terms, that great bear has been elected. That great bear has been elected—

**Mr Colle:** She's a grizzly.

**Mr Fonseca:** She is a grizzly. That great bear has been elected because she listens to the people. She knows what the people want. During this election, she came out and said, "It's not about taxes; it's about services, what you represent as a government and what you're giving back to the people." Well, the previous government decided that it would dismantle education, dismantle health care, not provide more energy that was needed for this province. This government instead has taken a different direction, a direction of leadership by listening to the people, by consulting with the people of Ontario and prioritizing where we're going, and by setting up and actually creating a health care system.

The previous government didn't want a system. The previous government actually was so ashamed to say they were government. They didn't want to be government. The previous government was about dismantling, breaking things up. We are about building, creating bridges, not burning bridges. We are about bringing an education system what it needs, looking after the needs

of the people of Ontario, not a government that is without a vision, a slash-and-burn government. Shame on the previous government. We are a government that is listening to the people, here to create for the people and leading Ontario to prosperity.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes in summary.

**Mr Yakubski:** I'd like to thank my colleagues from Timmins-James Bay, Guelph-Wellington, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Mississauga East for their responses and comments. They talked about different things, but as usual they just danced around, except for my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who went right to the meat of the matter, as he always does. The member for Mississauga East talked about the education plans of the new government. Yes, we got the promise of a 20-per-classroom limit in the primary grades. We're still waiting for that, and we're still waiting for those nurses. Do you know what else we're waiting for? We're waiting for police officers.

One of the big problems we've got in Toronto right now is crime and illegal guns. This government wants to just dance around that issue. You're not going to solve the issue of crime in Toronto if you're not willing to put more policemen on the street. In his motion today, the Premier talked about standing up and being counted and facing the cowards. Well, that's what we've got to do in Toronto: face those cowards who are committing these crimes with guns. Stop supporting your federal bosses on the long gun registry and put some money into police on the street in Toronto, where these crimes could be prevented.

Right now they're dancing all around the issue. They don't want to face it, but they know the only way to prevent crime is to have more people out there who can prevent crime. We've got to stop handcuffing the police in Toronto and let them do their job. But I can tell that this government is not going to do it. They don't want to face the true problems. They'll dance around that problem just like they dance around all these other problems. But they're not going to be able to dance around the legacy of broken promises for much longer.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'm pleased to see so much spirit at the end of the day, but alas, it's past 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*



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Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L)</b>	St Paul's	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L)</b>	Don Valley East / -Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint
<b>Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L)</b>	Scarborough East / -Est	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Eves, Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
<b>Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa-Orléans	
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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron-Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Food / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Mossop, Jennifer F.(L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
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Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
<b>Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve</b> (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Peterson, Tim (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
<b>Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry</b> (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
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Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 23 March 2004**

**Mardi 23 mars 2004**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers





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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 March 2004

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 23 mars 2004

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** The small and medium-sized business owners in my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka are deeply concerned by the recent course of action the Liberal government has been taking. First came the increase in corporate taxation to medium-sized businesses. Second, as of last week, came the removal of the hard cap on property taxes for businesses in Toronto and 34 municipalities around the province. Both of these are not only two more broken Liberal promises, but they will have detrimental effects on small and medium-sized businesses everywhere in Ontario.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, small and medium-sized enterprises employ more than half of working Ontarians and create most of the net new jobs. These businesses are unquestionably key to the overall well-being of our economy. Why, then, are the Liberals breaking promises by increasing the tax burden on them? According to the CFIB, getting rid of the property tax rate cap increases the need for financing, acts as a barrier to business formation and growth and accelerates business failures in periods of economic downturn. This is not the message that small and medium-sized business owners, the employers of more than half of this great province's population, want to hear.

Businesses in my constituency are worried that this is part of a trend of backing away from promises and increasing the burden on small and medium-sized businesses all over the province. It is key that our businesses feel confident that the government is on their side, and right now I can tell you that is not the case.

#### ST JOSEPH'S HEALTH CENTRE

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** Last month I was thrilled to attend an open house at St Joseph's Health Centre in Guelph to celebrate the centre's accreditation by the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation. St Joseph's was granted a three-year accreditation, the highest standard that can be achieved under the

CCHSA criteria. The surveyors found that residents were well cared for and that residents and families were very pleased with the excellent care they received.

St Joseph's Health Centre offers a unique combination of services. As a hospital it provides complex continuing care and rehabilitation services for Guelph and Wellington county. One wing is a long-term-care residence. Outpatient services are available to people of all ages.

The centre also offers excellent community programs for adults with an acquired brain injury and for seniors living in the community. Many families rely on St Joseph's Alzheimer daycare program.

St Joseph's Health Centre is a new facility. It is a tribute to the hard work of their dedicated staff, volunteers and physicians that they have achieved the highest level of accreditation in such a short time. Congratulations to everyone at St Joseph's.

#### AIR QUALITY

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Ladies and gentlemen of this Legislature, it's true the Liberals have floated yet another trial balloon. Why have they done this? Because the new McGuinty government wants you and all Ontarians to forget about the Sorbara scandal.

The new McGuinty government must have been up in the wee hours of the morning inflating this latest trial balloon with lots of hot air, because the first any of us heard of it was early this morning. It certainly wasn't in the Liberal election platform as one of McGuinty's dozens and dozens of promises. This time, the Liberals are talking about phasing out over four years the Drive Clean emissions testing program for all cars, vans and SUVs.

I want to see Minister Dombrowsky's exit strategy for this program. There are hundreds of garages that have put in about \$100,000 each for equipment and training to be certified as Drive Clean facilities. I want to know if and how they will be compensated for this significant investment.

Secondly, as part of the same trial balloon, the environment minister also announced that tougher standards would be applied to emissions testing for diesel trucks and buses. Guess what, Minister? You already announced this in a press release dated December 21, 2003.

As a member of the opposition, I must question the motive and timing behind the Drive Clean announcement. Why would a minister who seems so concerned about clean water not be concerned about clean air,



especially since 60% of smog is caused by emissions? Is this the same government that promised to eliminate coal-fired hydro generation by 2007? I think finance minister Greg Sorbara might have the answer to this very important question.

#### ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** I rise in honour of a great Canadian institution, a centre of culture and showcase of the arts. I rise to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Royal Ontario Museum, the ROM.

I should like to quote for a moment from the high eloquence of William Thorsell, the director and CEO of the ROM. He said: "The founders of the Royal Ontario Museum lived a century ago in a relatively small and isolated place called Toronto, Ontario, Canada. But they were men and women of the world. And so they insisted on bringing material evidence of that wider world into the heart of their society, to broaden its perspectives and to inspire the curiosity of their children and neighbours about the unfamiliar." With the Renaissance ROM program, this legacy continues.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, I would like to recognize the thousands of individuals who have volunteered their time and creative vision. In particular, I'd like to recognize the extraordinary contributions of two great Canadians: Mr Michael Lee Chin, whose donation of \$30 million will create a magnificent cultural landmark within the ROM itself, and as well, the long-standing, dedicated contributions of the Weston family, and in particular the Honourable Hilary Weston, the chair of this program and former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, whose family recently donated \$20 million.

The ROM is the embodiment of the collective spirit of Ontarians, and we wish it and its patrons all success in the next 90 years.

#### SCHOOL SAFETY

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Crumbling walls and ceilings, rotten window frames, lead in the water, leaking pipes, freezing classrooms and aging, even dangerous, electrical systems: These are the conditions of some of Ontario's public and Catholic schools. Don't take it from me. Take it from the Toronto Star reporter who visited many of our city's schools and found them in a deplorable state.

I've got a prop here that I won't be able to use, but it's here. There are some interesting pictures in there.

There is a \$6-billion backlog of major maintenance, repairs, upgrades and routine maintenance in our schools.

It was so wonderful that the Premier, Mr McGuinty, sent MPPs to visit schools, because I am sure they will all confirm the conclusions of the report in this Star article that I can't show. Mr Kennedy himself has toured some of these schools and knows the problem, and he estimated the cost to be around \$6 billion. I am sure that the money is rolling out, even as we speak.

Knowing that the Premier, the Minister of Education and all the Liberal MPPs who went out and visited the schools are aware of the crisis, the question I have is, when can we expect the money?

I have to agree with Mr Kennedy when he said in opposition, "Kids can't wait."

1340

#### WINCHESTER DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** I rise today to speak briefly about hope, determination and the difference we can all make. On November 26, 2003, I rose in this House to pose a question to Minister Smitherman, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, regarding a rural hospital, the Winchester District Memorial Hospital, in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

On that day, I asked the minister to meet with community representatives and myself to discuss the previous government's disregard for the Winchester district hospital's critical care needs. The hospital has not been renovated in years, and the building is dated and inhibits efficiency. The layout and design of the building are at odds with today's standards, being modelled after traditional acute care service.

I am elated to announce in this House today that the minister did meet with myself and community representatives on March 16 and delivered real, positive change to the citizens of the community. On March 16, Minister Smitherman announced approval for a planning and design grant of up to \$4 million to support our community hospital's redevelopment planning. This is just the boost this community hospital needed in order to reach their goal for their aptly named Renewing the Vision campaign.

This community should be commended and modelled upon for their extreme effort in fundraising for the redevelopment campaign for the hospital. In a greater community of 2,500 people, the citizens of Winchester and area have been able to fundraise \$13.2 million toward an ultimate goal of \$15 million. I praise them and the community's effort. I certainly know that our ministry appreciates what they have done.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):** I rise today to discuss an area of great concern to many constituents of my riding. Since the swearing-in of this government at the end of October last year, they have made a number of decisions that have adversely affected thousands of small businesses across Ontario. Soon after coming to power they removed the hydro rate cap, and that has caused large increases in the cost of hydro for small business, farmers and individuals alike. Many businesses will have to lay off workers or close their

doors this year because of this devastating change to their bottom line.

Promise number 32 on the great list of your campaign promises says that you will help businesses cut their electricity consumption by 5% before 2007. What they didn't realize is that you were going to achieve this goal by driving them out of business altogether.

This government has also broken promise number 99. They said repeatedly throughout the campaign that they would not raise small business taxes. The Premier also said in his television advertisements that he would not raise our taxes. By lifting the hard cap on business taxes in communities across Ontario, you are once again putting into jeopardy thousands and thousands of jobs. Small businesses across Ontario rely on the government to keep a stable tax environment without surprises. You have let down many families across Ontario with these decisions, and you are damaging the economic well-being of hundreds of communities all over the province.

### HYDRO ONE

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** I rise today to discuss something that I read in the paper this morning. The *Globe and Mail* reports that Michael Gourley was given a \$105,000 untendered contract from Hydro One. Worse, the only thing Mr Gourley produced for the money was one page of e-mail. Not only were the Tories giving away taxpayers' money to their friends, but they did not even require any work to be done before they cut the cheque.

The *Globe* this morning also tells us that Paul Rhodes was given over \$300,000 to tell Hydro bosses to stroke Mike Harris's ego.

Tom Long was given over a million dollars. What advice did he come up with? That Hydro One should underprice their stock on purpose to make the private sector happy at the expense of the people of Ontario.

Hydro also gave Leslie Noble a quarter of a million dollars. What did she produce? A memo telling Hydro to give the Tories social invitations; in other words, waste taxpayers' money.

But there is some good news. Under this government we are going to respect and honour taxpayers' money.

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With reference to that last statement, everyone should know that John Duffy, the most prominent Liberal in Ontario, is actually Leslie Noble's partner.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I rise today to express our ongoing disappointment with this government's continuous lack of commitment to transparency and accountability.

We all know that in November 2003, the chair of the Ontario Securities Commission, David Brown, sent a letter to this government's Minister of Finance, Greg

Sorbara, asking him to appoint Susan Wolburgh Jenah to serve as vice-chair of the OSC. By the way, Ms Jenah replaces Howard Wetston, who rendered judgment on former Liberal Premier Peterson's activities as a member of a board of directors. We also know that on February 18, 2004, Ms Jenah's appointment went through cabinet.

What we do not know is why this government continues to avoid public scrutiny of their appointments. The standing committee on government agencies' traditional mandate is to provide an opportunity to review intended appointments. As a result of the development and the conflict of interest that Minister Sorbara is in, the opposition's right to review the appointment of Susan Jenah should not have been denied by a Liberal-dominated committee tactic.

Actions like this send a message that the government is trying to avoid public scrutiny of their appointments and raise questions of what we are trying to hide.

Minister Sorbara put forward Ms Jenah to serve on the OSC while he knew that Royal Group Technologies was under investigation by the OSC.

When is this Liberal government going to live up to the ethical standards of transparency and accountability that the Ontario public expects and deserves?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### KEEP YOUR PROMISES ACT, 2004

#### LOI DE 2004 SUR L'OBLIGATION DE TENIR LES PROMESSES ÉLECTORALES

Mr Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act and the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 with respect to the election platforms of registered political parties / *Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi de 1994 sur l'intégrité des députés à l'égard des programmes électoraux des partis politiques inscrits.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** Just an explanation with respect to the bill. The bill requires the leaders of political parties to file their campaign promises with, first, the chief election officer. Then after the election, the leader of the governing party must file the promises made during the election writ period with the Integrity Commissioner. The commissioner will include in his annual report a report card on whether or not the government is keeping the promises they made during the election period.

### USE OF PROPS IN THE HOUSE

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday you made a ruling with respect to a document that the member for Timmins-



James Bay held in his hand. I'm asking you respectfully, given the difficulty that might pose for all of us on both sides of the House—for example, when the Minister of Finance stands up to deliver his budget, he has a significant number of documents in front of him.

Mr Speaker, what I'm respectfully requesting from you is some clarification with respect to what you would deem as a prop when we raise questions or issues in this House. We're looking for direction, explicit direction if that's possible, Mr Speaker.

1350

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Let me deal with one point of order at a time.

**Mr Kormos:** I want to speak to that point of order.

**The Speaker:** Go ahead.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Kormos:** You didn't recognize me, Mr Speaker? Am I to take it off?

I appreciate the point of order made by the member. With respect, I'd ask you not to make a specific ruling in that regard. I would ask you to defer the matter. This is something, in my view, that House leaders should discuss and perhaps make a joint submission to the Chair before the Chair takes a position that's unattractive to everybody, not just in the current chamber but in subsequent chambers. So I would ask you to defer making any ruling in that regard. Let House leaders attempt to resolve the issue and offer their advice to you, not binding you, of course, but their mere advice.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** Mr Speaker, on the same point of order: I think the member for Welland-Thorold makes very good sense—and I love that tie. But I do think it's worthy of further discussion by all the House leaders, and I know Mr Runciman and others will have a point of view on that.

In the interim, we have relied historically on the judgment of the Speaker, and we continue to believe that's the right way to go, but perhaps it is time we give clearer instruction to the Speaker about the views of the House on those matters.

**The Speaker:** I heard you very clearly. I think that whenever the time comes for the budget to be read and those documents are being prepared and put forward, I would not regard them as props.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Premier, in April of last year, you said, "Nothing inspires me more than the opportunity to combat the cynicism that far too many people feel about Ontario politics."

For the past month you have refused to answer the question about whether Mr Sorbara offered his resignation or whether you asked for it. Then apparently, today, out of the blue at about 1:20 this afternoon, you decided that you would finally, after a month of refusing to answer this question, answer it for the benefit of a Global TV reporter. Can you explain to me, why the change of heart after a month?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** As a general rule, I like to keep my conversations with my cabinet ministers and with members of my caucus confidential, and I know the leader of the official opposition can appreciate that. But it became very apparent that somehow some negative inferences were being drawn from a conversation which never took place. So, no, I did not ask for the minister's resignation, nor did he tender his resignation, because he did nothing wrong. He did nothing wrong, in my judgment, but if you don't believe me, I say to the leader of the official opposition that I recommend the opinion offered by the Integrity Commissioner.

**Mr Eves:** This is about your judgment. That's what this whole discussion is about.

On February 18 of this year, as we pointed out yesterday, cabinet approved an order in council appointing Ms Jenah as vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. She's a very qualified individual indeed. There's no doubt about that. That isn't the point.

The point is that Ms Jenah was recommended by the Minister and Ministry of Finance to you and to your executive council for appointment and that this process goes through the normal course: The chair of the Ontario Securities Commission wrote to the Minister of Finance back in November recommending her as a candidate, and then, finally, in February it comes forth and the individual is appointed by the executive council.

Would you not consider it appropriate that the Minister of Finance, under these circumstances, knowing what he knew when this appointment came forward, would declare a conflict to the secretary of cabinet, if he chose not to declare it to you, and would have that recorded and step aside for the purposes of deciding that particular order in council?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I want to remind the leader of the official opposition that this individual came to us strongly recommended by the Ontario Securities Commission. Secondly, this was my appointment, not an appointment put forward by the Minister of Finance. Thirdly, the Integrity Commissioner addressed this issue when he specifically said, "I see no violation of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994.... I do not think that you were in a position of conflict as a result of not taking the remedial action you took on February 25, 2004, earlier." This ends the matter.

**Mr Eves:** With all due respect to the Premier, I have a copy of the Integrity Commissioner's letter here, and at no point in this five-page letter does the Integrity Commissioner even remotely refer to the appointment of Ms Jenah. The point here is, is there a possible potential for

conflict, and why would the Minister of Finance not do the right thing when there was at least the potential for a conflict somewhere down the road? Knowing that the board of a corporation on which he sat for some period of time was at least under review by the Ontario Securities Commission, knowing there was a possibility that Ms Jenah and others could be asked to sit in judgment of him and his fellow directors on that board, would not the appropriate thing to do, would not the appropriate standard be, to declare this potential conflict and step aside?

The Integrity Commissioner does not deal with that in his judgment; he was not asked to. All he is able to do, and what he did, is say that the minister to date has not contravened any section of the Members' Integrity Act.

This is about your standards. What are your standards?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I agree it's about my standards. I have made a judgment call on this, and I'm proud of the call I have made. The Minister of Finance is an individual of impeccable integrity. He has acted responsibly. He has done the right thing in the circumstances.

I want to quote from the Integrity Commissioner's letter once more. He says: "Conduct cannot be assessed in a vacuum. When your conduct is assessed in its appropriate context, given the narrow range of available alternatives, I do not think that you were in a position of conflict as a result of not taking the remedial action that you took on February 25, 2004, earlier." I agree with the Integrity Commissioner.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** I want to return to the Premier. Throughout this entire ethical scandal, throughout this entire ethical mess, you have refused repeated attempts from both the opposition and the media to answer questions directly. Yesterday I asked you directly if the Minister of Finance had made any declarations to you in your pre-cabinet integrity session that there were any problems in any company or organization that he had been involved with that had fuelled a criminal probe by the RCMP, that had fuelled an investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission and Revenue Canada. You refused to answer.

So I'm going to ask you again: Did Greg Sorbara make you aware of any potential problems or irregularities that occurred on his watch at Royal Group Technologies, something that you, as the Premier-designate, would have been entitled to know before you made him your Minister of Finance? The people of Ontario are entitled to know. Will you answer that question, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The Integrity Commissioner has spoken to this matter at some considerable length, and I want to review a few of the very simple and brief statements that he has made in his letter.

First of all, he says, "It would have been wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose, or to cause the disclosure of the OSC/Royal investigation." He goes on to say, "I see no violation of the Members' Integrity Act," and he concludes by saying, "I do not think that you were in a position of conflict as a result of not taking

the remedial action that you took on February 25, 2004, earlier." This ends the matter.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, if it was only so easy. Your refusal to answer questions on this scandal is beginning to speak volumes about the ethical standards of your administration. You see, the Toronto Star reported on February 28 that your man, Sorbara, was a whistleblower for the problems at Royal Group Technologies. If that's the truth, I want to know, and the people of Ontario are entitled to know, if Greg Sorbara made you aware of any of those problems at Royal Group Technologies before you named him as the chief custodian of investor confidence and the czar of securities regulation in Ontario. So I'm going to ask you directly once again, and will do so for the next month, Premier, if that's what it takes to get an ethical answer: Were you made aware of any problems at Royal Group Technologies before you named Mr Sorbara to cabinet, yes or no?

1400

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Again, I want to commend to the members of the opposition the letter from the Integrity Commissioner, where he treats this very specifically. He says: "Put bluntly, it would have been manifestly wrong for you to involve yourself or your ministry in any aspect of the OSC's investigation of Royal, or in any OSC investigation. In particular it would have been wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose, or to cause the disclosure of the OSC/Royal investigation."

**Mr Baird:** Let's look at what opinion around the province is saying on this issue. "It's ... a no-brainer that Sorbara should have resigned"—the Ottawa Sun; "Finance Minister Should Step Aside"—the Kitchener-Waterloo Record; "In opposition, McGuinty would be the first one screaming for blood"—the North Bay Nugget; "Sorbara Must Quit Until Probe Over"—the Toronto Star. "That the Premier, who routinely demanded the heads of Tory ministers for far less, didn't order Sorbara to resign from cabinet ... at least until the probe ... is completed, suggests he isn't up to the job"—the Toronto Sun.

Premier, are you going to do the right thing: Are you going to demand this minister's resignation, or are you going to continue to engage in some sort of ethical limbo dance where you continue to lower the ethical bar? How low will your ethical bar go, Premier? Will you answer that?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** It is becoming—it has become—painfully obvious that the members opposite have nothing more and nothing less to offer than innuendo. The Integrity Commissioner has ruled that Minister Sorbara has done nothing wrong. He says that "it would have been wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose." He goes on to say, "I see no violation of the Members' Integrity Act." He goes on further to say, "I do not think that you were in a position of conflict."

Let me be clear about something else: Given the millions of dollars in untendered contracts paid to this gang's top advisers, secret untendered contracts, they have nothing to offer by way of lessons when it comes to integrity.



## AIR QUALITY

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Before the election, you wanted people to believe that you were in favour of clean air. You wanted people to believe that you are the green Premier. Now, after the election, we find that your Minister of the Environment is scrapping the Drive Clean program, the strategy which forces the most polluting vehicles to clean up and reduce their exhaust emissions. Premier, why are you now, after the election, saying it's OK to drive a vehicle that pollutes the environment?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know the Minister of the Environment would like to speak to this.

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** I'm very happy to have the opportunity to address the issue, and I'm very proud of this government's commitment to clean air in the province of Ontario. The Premier has made it clear that all programs in the Ministry of the Environment are under review.

I want to talk about this government's commitment to clean air. We are committed to closing coal-fired plants in Ontario. We are committed to cleaner gasoline. We are committed to public transit. Just next week, we will have the toughest emission standards for heavy-duty trucks in North America. So I believe this government's commitment to clean air is very clear to the people of Ontario.

**Mr Hampton:** I think we just heard that in fact Drive Clean is on the way out. As for your commitment to coal plants, let's be clear: For the last six months you fiddled while coal burned. That's what's happening on that front.

Now, Minister, here's the reality: In places like Hamilton and Toronto, Drive Clean has resulted in a 15% reduction in pollution from car exhaust. When that's happening, when it has already proven that it is reducing some of the worst air pollutants that come from car exhausts, why would you even be considering reviewing such a program? Why would you even be considering cutting such a program in Ontario, or is it just the case that it's now after the election and you can break a promise and drop the facade?

**Hon Mrs Dombrowsky:** After the election, this government was even more committed to ensuring that the people of Ontario have clean air to breathe. I think it's interesting, and it strikes me strange, that the leader of the third party can stand in this House after the comments he made last week that coal is very much a part of the NDP plan on energy, and suggest that we're turning away from clean air in the province of Ontario. They're in fact the people who have abandoned the notion that coal is killing people in Ontario. We're going to deal with that.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I remember that when you were in opposition, you

and the Premier used to give long-winded speeches about the value of child care, and you used to give speeches that you were going to commit new money to child care. We've been talking with municipal child care services in Toronto, Ottawa, Kenora, Sudbury, Stratford, Sioux Lookout, Fort Frances and Peterborough, and there hasn't been what they would call new money for child care, such that all of them are either considering shutting down some of their municipal child care facilities or cutting places. Can you explain how, before the election, child care was important and now, after the election, you seem to have the same policy as the Conservatives: flatline the budget and let them close. Can you tell us what's the difference now?

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I'd like to reassure you that child care is very much a priority for this government. With respect to comparing us to the former government, let me tell you and remind you that for the first time in 10 years, we transferred federal money for child care to child care. We are presently reviewing all early childhood programs, including child care, and will be coming forward very soon with an announcement.

**Mr Hampton:** Just a couple of weeks ago we put forward a proposal before the finance committee that would see you put at least \$75 million of your own new money into child care. Your own members voted it down. You talk about federal money. You put about \$19 million of federal money into child care, money that doesn't cost you anything. What about the \$200 million a year that you get from the federal government for child care?

Minister, when you go out and talk to municipalities, they're very clear: They're not getting any more money under your government than they got under the Conservative government. What that means is that municipality after municipality is having to look at closing their municipal child care centres. They're having to look at telling children on the street, "No more space for you." Is this, again, another broken promise? It was important before the election—

1410

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

**Mr Hampton:** —but now, it's not nearly so important? Why don't they have the money now? Why are municipalities being forced to look at closing down their child care—

**The Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** I'd like to clarify that this money you're talking about from the federal government, this new multilateral framework, has not come to Ontario yet, but we have committed this money to child care. With respect to my colleague saying no to the \$75 million, we did not want to be pigeonholed on one number. We have not finished the review of what is necessary. It will take a few more months to clean up 10 years of not one penny of investment in child care from the former government.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to my constituent, the Minister of Finance. Before I put my question, I want to caution the minister that there are children in the audience. Minister, you are very aware, of course, that the company for which you served as chair of the audit committee and as a director is under investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Ontario Securities Commission and Revenue Canada. Has the minister consulted or retained legal counsel with respect to the OSC's investigation? If so, why; and if not, why not?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I have not retained counsel. The reason why I have not retained counsel is because I am not under investigation, I am not involved in the matter and it would be foolish to retain counsel for not being involved in that matter in one single respect.

**Mr Klees:** The reason I ask the question is because I'm concerned about my friend opposite. Being a former director, particularly being the chair of the audit committee, he would know full well, as any member here would know, that with a serious number of investigations ongoing it won't be long before this investigation comes calling on the chair of the audit committee. So it would be prudent to retain advice, to retain someone who would give him some guidance. I would suggest, unless the minister can absolutely stand in his place today and guarantee that those investigations will not end up with a phone call to his office, that he is imminently under investigation. Isn't that as much of an embarrassment to the government as if he was?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** The quality and tone of my friend's remarks is the same kind of slander, defamation and irrelevancy that they have used on this matter since day one. I want to tell my friend opposite that I am absolutely sure of my conduct whilst I was a member of the board of Royal Group Technologies. I want to tell him as well that I am absolutely sure that during that period I conducted myself with the very highest standards of fiduciary responsibility as a director. I want to tell my friend that I am absolutely certain that I am not the subject of any investigation. I want to tell my friend that I am absolutely sure that from day one I did what was required of me and what was correct in all of these matters. And I want to tell my friend that I am absolutely delighted that that has been confirmed by Mr Justice Coulter Osborne.

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin):** I have a question for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mental health care issues in my constituency have become a major issue. I have discussed this problem with many of my constituents who have dropped in to my office in Elliot Lake, or who have made phone calls or written letters. Can you assure my constituents in the northeastern Ontario area that they will have full access to mental health services?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I would like to thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin. This government is committed to the expansion of community-based services. This is at the heart of our plans for the transformation of our health care system. Regrettably, this is but one more area where when that party was in power they rejected the opportunity every single year to increase by even one penny the amount of money available at the community level for mental health services.

So the assurance that I can give the honourable member is that we're building on the recommendations of the mental health task force reports and we're working to ensure that mental health services are not just available, but more available than they are at present in communities all across the province.

**Mr Brown:** Minister, I have met with Mr David Pope, who's the chair of the East Algoma Mental Health Clinic—Diana Price is the director—and a representative, Carol Philbin Jolette, of the Northeast Mental Health Centre. They tell me that they are under significant pressure in the Elliot Lake area, not because of funding cutbacks but because of increased labour costs that have put the clinic in Elliot Lake in a severe position.

Minister, could you assure me that you can work with the community, work with the clinic, and ensure that my constituents get the mental health care in the community that they deserve?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I acknowledge that the Northeast Mental Health Centre has been working on plans for the coming year. As our government is presently working on plans for our budget, I hope to be in a position to give more confidence to that community in the short term.

I make the commitment that the transformation we are working on with respect to health care is to deliver more resources and better results at the community-based level. After years and years of no funding by that party on the other side, our challenge is made all the greater, but our determination will see us through. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to work with my honourable friend and other members from northeastern Ontario to ensure that the mental health services that those communities are in need of are there for them.

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Our government increased health care funding from \$17.6 billion to—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** That's not a point of order. New question.

## APPOINTMENTS PROCESS

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** My question is for the Premier. Given your refusal to answer some specific questions regarding the discussion surrounding an appointment of the vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission in cabinet, I would like to ask you today what the process is with your government with respect to Premier's appointments.



You're suggesting, I gather, that there's no consultation with the minister responsible for the particular agency, board or commission. If it's a new chair of the lottery corporation, if it's a new chair for the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services or if it's a new chair for the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, are you suggesting that there's no consultation, no advice sought from the minister responsible for that agency? Is that your process? You simply do this in isolation, without any consultation or advice asked for or provided?

1420

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** What the member opposite is interested in, of course, is the Integrity Commissioner's response, and I'm delighted to provide it to him once again. He says that he saw no violation of the Members' Integrity Act. He said, "I do not think"—we're making reference to the Minister of Finance—"that you were in a position of conflict as a result of not taking the remedial action you took on February 25, 2004, earlier."

**Mr Runciman:** The Premier is insulting the intelligence of each and every Ontarian who might be watching these proceedings. I asked him a specific question related to his appointment process, with respect to Premier's appointments, and the terms of consultation with ministers who were responsible for those agencies. He refused to respond to that question. He has been given direction by the backroom boys with respect to how to respond to these issues.

I served in cabinet under three different Premiers for nine years. I never saw a Premier's appointment go through cabinet without some kind of consultation, advice asked for and provided by the minister responsible. Once again I am asking the Premier a direct question with respect to this issue, the appointment of a vice-chair of the securities commission, any other Premier's appointment: Do you or do you not ask for advice and input from the minister responsible? Do you or do you not?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I understand that the member has a keen interest in something that has already been dealt with by the Integrity Commissioner, but I can tell you that there are some very real questions on the minds of Ontarians today that have to do with untendered secret contracts. It's passing strange that the member opposite has no particular interest in any transparency with respect to that.

A gentleman by the name of Paul Rhodes received contracts totalling over \$1 million. Tom Long received contracts, either directly or through his company, of over \$2 million. One Leslie Noble: total so far, over \$300,000. Michael Gourley: total so far, over \$4 million. Grand total so far: \$9,209,739.79 of taxpayer money to benefit the friends of this former government.

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In the last year we have seen the lives of many

women taken at the hands of estranged husbands and significant others. The city of London is still mourning such a tragedy. All this reveals the need to do more about the issue of violence against women. The Premier responded, and he appointed his parliamentary assistant, Laurel Broten, to develop a package of reforms that will ultimately lead to a reduction in domestic violence and the protection of the victims. My question is: What is the status of Ms Broten's consultations, and when will she be presenting her report?

**Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues):** Thank you so much to the member opposite for the question in an area that is of great concern to all Liberals and, I think, all MPPs in this House. I think the member opposite will be happy to learn that I am chairing an interministerial task force made up of several cabinet ministers, because the issue of domestic violence, and how we address what government's role can be in the resolution of it, does have more to do with several ministries, not just one. We, as an interministerial task force, have already met. We have received a report by the Premier's PA which has outlined for us a series of recommendations based on a number of consultations that have been made in the first quarter of this year.

I hope that in very short order we're going to be in a position to make some announcements about some action, as we move forward between today and this coming fall, for a rollout of a plan to cover this entire term, where several of us, as ministers, will be taking this task seriously, to make some very concrete solutions for people who are very anxious and who, frankly, really need our help.

**Mrs Van Bommel:** Minister, currently there is a lockout of workers at the Yellow Brick House women's shelter in Aurora. As this is one of your agencies, can you tell me what the government's position is on this lockout?

**Hon Ms Pupatello:** As you know, the ministers wouldn't get involved in negotiations between management and their staff. We have kept a very keen eye on this particular situation at the Yellow Brick House, specifically because we have to be certain that the individuals involved, the women and their children, are safe. We check on that every day. We are guaranteed that the people who've been involved as clients of the facility have been safe through all this.

I'm very happy to tell you as well that tomorrow, both sides are going back to the bargaining table. I am wishing both sides well and I am also hoping for a very speedy resolution to their negotiations so that we'll have some very good news in the near future.

#### HIGHWAY 69

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The Liberal election platform said, "Highways are a critical part of the northern infrastructure. Good highways are vital. They are sometimes literally lifelines."

You promised that the four-laning of northern highways would be funded by the government through a northern Ontario highway strategy. You yourself specifically promised that Highway 69 would be four-laned from the same strategy. But your Premier recently told Sudbury media that the four-laning of Highway 69 may be funded by tolls. This would clearly break your election promise. Minister, will you guarantee today that Highway 69 will not be a toll road?

**Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** There is absolutely no question that we have committed to a northern Ontario highway strategy, because we believe that it is extremely important that the highways in northern Ontario are not only safe but provide opportunities for economic development.

When I look back at what the previous two governments did with regard to highways, I see that in your election platform of 1990, the member from Nickel Belt might be reminded that she said that her party was going to four-lane highways. Not one bit of four-laning of highways in northern Ontario took place under that government.

I must tell the member from Nickel Belt that we have a commitment to a highway strategy in northern Ontario, and we will live up to that commitment for a northern Ontario highway system.

**Ms Martel:** The minister knows that the information he just provided to the House was completely inaccurate, but the question was about tolls—specifically, tolls on Highway 69—because your promise during the election was very clear. It was the government that was going to fund the four-laning of Highway 69, not through tolls but through government funding.

You know that there is no close alternative route between Sudbury and Toronto. You know that imposing tolls will put northern businesses and northern truckers who rely on this highway at an extreme disadvantage. You know that tolls are going to undermine our community's tourism strategy, and you know that tolls will force our residents to pay twice for an essential highway corridor between Sudbury and Toronto.

Minister, the four-laning of Highway 69 cannot be done on the backs of northerners. I ask again, will you confirm today that Highway 69 will not be a toll road?

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** Let me reinforce the message that our government believes that a northern Ontario highway strategy is extremely important. But let me also reinforce the message that our Premier at no time indicated that Highway 69 would be a toll road. He suggested that the Minister of Transportation would be deciding on what roads would be tolled.

Let me tell you that my job as Minister of Northern Development and Mines is to ensure that the other ministers in cabinet realize the concerns of northerners when it comes to northern roads, when it comes to the upgrading of northern roads, when it comes to the four-laning of northern roads. We will not adopt the NDP

platform that said, "If the only case for four-laning Highway 69"—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question.

1430

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is for the Premier. Yesterday you said the finance minister is not the subject of an investigation. We know that there are three investigations ongoing. We know from the press release of the company involved, Royal Group Technologies Ltd, that the investigation relates to \$32 million of goods and services over the course of the past five years. We know also that Mr Sorbara was a director and the chair of the audit committee of the company for parts of that time.

Premier, you know as a lawyer yourself that corporations do not act on their own; indeed, they act through their directors, and their directors stand in a fiduciary duty to shareholders and others in the corporation. Is it your intention to continue to hide behind the corporate veil, or will you now acknowledge that in his capacity as a director of Royal Group Technologies Ltd, Mr Sorbara is indeed a subject of these ongoing investigations?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I can appreciate that the member opposite has his own idiosyncratic perspective on this, but I rely on the Integrity Commissioner. One of the things that he said is as follows: "Removing yourself from OSC affairs would have resulted in frenzied speculation about the reason for your decision. This speculation would indirectly have led to the disclosure of OSC's Royal investigation and to undeserved speculation about other companies with which you were formerly associated."

I know that the members opposite have, for their very own personal reasons, an interest in continuing to ask about this, and we will continue to respond to those questions. But for our purposes, the matter has been settled in a final manner by the Integrity Commissioner.

**Mr Flaherty:** It would have been quicker for the Premier to simply say, "Yes, I'm going to hide with my minister behind the corporate veil."

But let's look at the substance of the difficulty here. The substance isn't what is referred to by the Integrity Commissioner. He's dealing with the last short period of time. The substance of the investigations is not the last short period of time; it's a period of five years and \$32 million. For most of that time, Mr Sorbara was a director of the company. The Integrity Commissioner cannot pass judgment on that. With respect, despite your comments yesterday that the minister acted responsibly and appropriately, you're in no position to pass judgment on that. That's the whole point.

The point is that while these investigations are ongoing, it would be inappropriate in Ontario for a Minister of Finance to present a budget which affects the capital markets and so on in the province. That's the point.



You're not in a position to judge. Mr Sorbara is not in a position to judge. Will you now ask for the resignation of Mr Sorbara until the investigations are over, or are you still not up to the job?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say to the member opposite, no, I will not be asking for the minister's resignation. If he is privy to information in connection with any particular investigation that he would like to share with the members of this House, then we'd be delighted to receive that. But if he does not, then this amounts to nothing more and nothing less than innuendo. I suggest that we should focus on the people's business, like health care, education and the like.

### GANG VIOLENCE

**Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre):** My question is to the Attorney General. Scarborough has always been my home. It's where I grew up; it's where I'm raising my own family. Our community has always been and remains a safe community. However, over the last number of months, gang activity has taken the lives of a number of our young people right across Toronto—actually, even across the greater Toronto area.

The people in my community are looking for answers and they're looking for leadership from all levels of government. My question to the Attorney General is, what is our government doing to combat gang violence?

**Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal):** I and the Minister of Community Safety have announced a special anti-gang and anti-gun unit. The purpose of it is to try to tackle gang violence in a way that was never done before. We are assigning specialized, experienced crown prosecutors to the Toronto gun squad to work with the police from day one in the investigation. That is going to permit us to try to get those special wire taps, get those special warrants that are necessary to become more organized than the organized crime. We have received a very positive response from Chief Fantino on this. We are engaging in this extremely aggressive gangbuster approach to give people more confidence.

#### *Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Bryant:** People of your community, I say to the member, and across Toronto and Ontario should know that we're doing everything we can, we're doing it in different ways and we're going to make a real, concrete difference with this new approach.

**Mr Duguid:** Addressing the gang problem is essential if we're going to keep our communities safe. As the minister mentioned, gun-related crimes are tied to the problem. Last year, all but a few of the fatal shootings in Toronto involved gang activity. Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that gun-related crimes are prosecuted to the full extent of the law and that our justice system is not simply a revolving door?

**Hon Mr Bryant:** I thank the member, and I really do welcome this question, because I think it's important for

everybody to understand that crown prosecutors do not and will not plead down or dismiss or do anything other than pursue gun crimes as aggressively as possible. That is the policy of crown prosecutors, and that is the practice of crown prosecutors. I have said, as we review the crown policy manual, that if there is more we can do, we will do that. But let me be clear that we are trying to do things differently than the previous government. For example, we're going to be putting together an unprecedented sentencing package with expert evidence provided so that judges can understand the impact of gun violence and gang violence on the streets. This, we feel, may make a real, concrete difference in getting stiffer sentences. I know the previous government isn't happy about it, because they wish they did it, but the reality is that McGuinty is governing.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** My question is to the Premier. There is a story rolling around about Royal Group Technologies and the involvement of Finance Minister Sorbara. It just seems to get more entangled each day, Premier.

We've established that your finance minister did not disclose his involvement. He was somewhat unclear about his involvement on the OSC appointment. Your finance minister was indeed, as has been mentioned, the chair of the audit committee, which would be charged with ensuring accountability of corporate audits and procedures. Now the Royal Group is connected in the Caribbean casino—over \$30 million in question. The shareholders are questioning that. Now, we hear, with a report from TVOntario, you're aware of the recent Ontario labour relations decision on one of Royal Group's submissions, of trying to organize Baron Metal. I'm looking at the transcript. This was a organizing drive by the United Steelworkers—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr O'Toole:** —and it was a contentious drive, where threats of death occurred.

Premier, do you acknowledge these transactions or transgressions, and do you respond that your finance minister is inappropriately involved and should step aside?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** If the member opposite is privy to certain kinds of information that he thinks would be of interest to any investigation, then I would strongly encourage that he provide that to the authorities. He did raise the issue again of the minister's refusal to disclose the information that he had, and I want to quote again from the Integrity Commissioner's letter. I'll have to keep doing this, because apparently they're still not getting it over there.

It says: "Put bluntly, it would have been manifestly wrong for you to involve yourself or your ministry in any aspect of the OSC's investigation of Royal, or in any OSC investigation. In particular it would have been

wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose, or to cause the disclosure of the OSC/Royal investigation.”

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**Mr O'Toole:** It's clear you're obfuscating the information that is available to all of us. The report you keep referring to certainly doesn't substantiate that there isn't an involvement of any sort.

Given the issues, not just around the casino, I think more importantly it's the integrity issue that's being raised here. The substantive part of the question is the integrity of your finance minister. I'm only speaking on behalf of my constituents and the people of Ontario.

Do you believe, given all the swirling around this issue—what is proven and not proven isn't the issue—it would be appropriate, in fact dignified, to step aside? I don't know if he is the proper person to present the budget to the people of Ontario. In fact, my question to you is, are you going to present to us the Integrity Commissioner's report or are you going to present the Royal Group budget report?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I know the Minister of Finance is interested in speaking to this.

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I don't want to get involved in a lecture on integrity. I just want to say to my friend that as a member of the opposition he has the freedom, if you like, to make spurious allegations about individuals and corporate entities. As a minister of the crown, it would be entirely inappropriate for me to comment on any public company, or private company, for that matter. That would be a breach of integrity. No matter what they engage in over there, that will not happen on this side. We know what integrity is and what our responsibility is, and I reject that question categorically.

## BIRTH CERTIFICATES

**Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. At my constituency office we are being absolutely flooded with requests for birth certificates. I have one employee who is working full-time, initiating tracking and administering emergency requests for birth certificates. Currently, my office alone is dealing with over 200 requests. Could you tell me what steps you are taking to address this backlog?

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** I want to thank the honourable member from Huron-Bruce, and in particular her staff and also the staff of all MPPs, for the work they are doing as the office of the Registrar General faces some very difficult circumstances.

This is a situation that I and my government do not find acceptable. It's a situation we inherited from the previous government, where the office of the Registrar General was systematically underfunded for years. Certainly I am concerned about not simply pointing the finger of blame but taking concrete action.

Therefore, I was pleased to travel to Thunder Bay on behalf of the Premier and this government to announce a \$2.6-million investment in the office of the Registrar General, so that we can properly staff the office and ensure that the level of service is one that is acceptable. We have hired 87 full- and part-time staff, we've moved to two production shifts and we've decreased our waiting time on the 1-800 number by 37%.

I know it's a sensitive point with the opposition. I do want to assure the honourable members opposite that we're also working on death certificates and we'll get one over to the PC Party as soon as possible.

**Mrs Mitchell:** I commend the Minister of Consumer and Business Services for all the measures your ministry has taken to speed up to the process and tackle the backlog. It certainly is appreciated.

I also want to have some assurances that security is being taken into account. People in my riding want to know if they are being protected from identity theft, or worse. What steps will your office take to ensure that birth certificates are received in a timely manner and also to ensure high levels of security?

**Hon Mr Watson:** Security of a foundation document like the birth certificate is paramount, obviously. We want to ensure that when the application is submitted, the information on the actual application matches with the birth registry information both in Thunder Bay and in Toronto. We want to ensure that the integrity of the system is in place. I have great confidence in the staff. I do want to commend the staff who have been overworked in Thunder Bay and in Toronto dealing with this huge backlog that we find ourselves with, that we've inherited from the previous government. As I said, we're committed not only to security but to improving the level of service, something that I believe all members appreciate, as well as the citizens who are waiting for a birth certificate in Ontario.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is for the Premier. I'd like to know why you changed responsibility for the Ontario Securities Commission to the Chair of the Management Board?

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** It's time for the third party to ask their question.

## ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm glad to know that I can still count. My question is for Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Could I recognize you? Timmins-James Bay.

**Mr Bisson:** You did. You recognized me as a member from the third party. Thank you, Speaker.

My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Prior to the provincial election, your leader in North Bay promised the community and workers at the Ontario Northland Transportation Com-



mission that should he form the government, not one job would be lost at the ONTC. Now, after the election, your government announces that the size of the workforce at the ONTC is going to be reduced from 600 to 400 jobs by way of early retirement, and hardly any of those jobs are going to be replaced with new workers.

My question is this: Why did your government break your promise to the community of North Bay and to the workers at the ONTC?

**Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** I'm very, very proud that this was another promise kept by Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals. The Tories' plan to privatize the ONTC was a failure. We made a commitment to end that privatization plan, and we delivered on that promise. We are very proud of what we have been able to accomplish in this short time in office. What we've allowed to happen—because we believed in the people of North Bay, we believed in the people along the Highway 11 corridor, we believed that the ONTC should not have been privatized. People believed it and that's why they voted they way they voted, and we lived up to that commitment.

**Mr Bisson:** Minister, you have a funny way of keeping your commitments and your promises. Yes, the promise you made was that you would not privatize; fine. But you also promised, and I quote the Premier when he was touring through North Bay—boy, I need glasses these days—“We've got a declining population here in North Bay. You take away those 600 jobs or a percentage of them and the spinoff jobs that will be lost is just not the right thing to do. That's the kind of things that we as Liberals fight against.” Two hundred jobs are going to be lost in North Bay under your watch, Minister. My question, simply put, is this—and please answer: Why did you break your promise to the workers and to the community of North Bay?

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** It's amazing how only the NDP can try to turn a good-news story into something bad. We lived up to the commitment to end the privatization plan with the ONTC, as planned by the Tories. We did that because we trusted the people of North Bay to come up with the solution. We appreciate the ideas that they came back to us with. And so, on March 4, I was very happy to announce a strategic alliance between ON Telcom and Telus. I was pleased to announce that there would be a voluntary—voluntary—retirement package offered to the employees at the ONTC. I was pleased to announce that we directed the ONTC board to ensure that there was a long-term strategy attached so that we'll never have the uncertainty that was present over the course of the last eight years along the Highway 11 corridor.

1450

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is to the Premier. You have said repeatedly that, “To the best of my knowledge,” your finance minister “isn't under investigation.” How is it that you know that, sir?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I'm not sure that I understand the member's question, but I'll try to be as clear as I can. No information of any kind has been brought to my attention which would indicate that the minister is the subject of an investigation.

**Mr Baird:** I want to follow up a question that I asked the Premier yesterday. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the investigations branch at the OSC and Revenue Canada aren't in the habit of issuing press releases when individuals or corporations become the subject of investigations. I say directly to the Premier a very specific question: Would you have any objection to contacting Mr Justice Coulter Osborne and asking him to make inquiries with the RCMP, with the OSC and with Revenue Canada as to whether or not your finance minister is, was or could be the subject of an investigation, or whether any of his actions could be? Would you have Justice Osborne make those inquiries, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** First of all, the member is very much aware that he himself could make that kind of request of our Integrity Commissioner. From my perspective, what the member is really asking us to prove here is that one of us is not under investigation. I don't know for sure if any of us in this chamber might not be the subject of some kind of an investigation which has not been brought to our attention.

We think the responsible approach is the one that has been taken by the Minister of Finance. That is the judgment that I have made in this matter, but just as important, and perhaps more important, it is the judgment that has been rendered by the Integrity Commissioner himself.

#### TOURISM

**Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie):** My question is to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. The citizens of my riding recognize the tremendous importance of tourism to our local economy. Over the past several months we have seen our government invest in a number of tourism initiatives and advertising campaigns intended to lure tourists to our province, and they have been great investments.

Minister, what action have you taken to ensure that tourists and potential visitors to this province are informed about the exciting tourism opportunities in northern Ontario and consider northern Ontario as a tourist destination?

**Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation):** I thank the member for the question. I want to tell him that I consider northern Ontario to be a wonderful place for people to visit.

My ministry has taken steps to establish a partnership with industry partners in northern Ontario, such as Destination North, the Northern Ontario Native Tourism Association and Ontario's North Tours. You would know that, as an organization which deals with cities and attractions in all of northern Ontario.

In total, almost \$3 million has been committed to marketing programs, partnerships and product development initiatives to date in the north. In addition, agreements have been finalized with each of the six northern Ontario tourism associations to receive \$100,000 in financial support for 2003-04. Furthermore, a meeting has been established for April 1, 2004, to discuss and negotiate agreements with each NOTAP for the 2004-05 year.

This ministry will continue to work with our northern stakeholders to build upon the many tourism experiences that already exist in northern Ontario so that the area remains a tourist destination for many years to come.

### LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this second group of legislative pages serving the 38th Parliament.

We have Devin Ballantyne from Elgin-Middlesex-London; Mason Brooks, London North Centre; Lucia Chaplin, Davenport; Tracy Chen, Toronto Centre-Rosedale; Valerie Christie, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex; Sarah Cipkar, Essex; Michael Da Silva, York South-Weston; Sara Dookhoo, Etobicoke North; Austine Ha, Willowdale; Lauren Haberer, Huron-Bruce; Mark Hammett, Brampton Centre; Jordan Kiss, Prince Edward-Hastings; Alyssa Moore, Leeds-Grenville; Michael Murray, Simcoe North; Victor Ngai, Scarborough-Rouge River—great place; Andrew Pawluch, Sudbury; Nikita Ramdahani, Whitby-Ajax—let me pronounce that better for Nikita Ramdahani; Brendon Smith, Kitchener Centre; Mary Vaccaro, Niagara Falls; and Sarah Wilkinson, Oak Ridges.

We all welcome them in the good old-fashioned way. Thank you for serving us.

### PETITIONS

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing” more “user fees on seniors; and

“Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

“Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report’s strong support for a national drug program;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

“To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

“To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more” health care “funding from seniors.”

### LANDFILL

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

“Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

“Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

“Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

“Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

“Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources.”

I’ll sign my name to this.

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr John O’Toole (Durham):** I would like to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s seniors have worked long and hard to build the outstanding quality of life achieved in our province; and

“Whereas seniors’ drug benefits enable older persons to live healthier lives and avoid more extensive care in hospitals and nursing homes; and



"Whereas, in addition to their taxes, many seniors already contribute toward their prescription drugs through deductibles and dispensing fees; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed pensions already face higher costs through property taxes and electricity charges;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not eliminate or reduce the provincial drug benefits provided to seniors" in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition.

1500

### TUITION FEES

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I have a petition from the students of George Brown College. They've been sending in petitions almost every week. Hundreds of them have signed this petition. I will read it, because it is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Freeze Tuition Fees

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada;"—imagine—"and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels; and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it.

### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents:

"Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors, and to maintain the present drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medication."

I proudly sign this petition. I believe this is what the government should be doing.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to join my colleagues in presenting a petition to protect seniors from higher drug costs, signed by constituents from the Black Creek Leisure Homes in the Fort Erie-Stevensville area. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

Beneath my friends' Mike Frenette and Tom and Judy Lowe, I affix my signature in support.

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on fixed incomes, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make a choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise the costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians."

It's signed by several hundred people in my riding. I agree with the petition, I thank the people who have signed it and I affix my name to it.

### BIRTH CERTIFICATES

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous government did not commit the necessary resources to provide birth certificates in an efficient manner;

"We, the undersigned, applaud this government for improving the process dramatically."

It's signed by six wonderful residents of Ontario.

## WATERLOO-WELLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents of Waterloo-Wellington need and deserve excellent roads and highways for their safe travel; and

"Whereas good transportation links are vital to the strength of our local economy, supporting job creation through the efficient delivery of our products to the North American marketplace; and

"Whereas transit services are essential to managing the future growth of our urban communities and have a relatively minimal impact on our natural environment; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott asked all municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington to provide him with their top transportation priorities for the next five years and beyond, all of them responded and their recommendations form the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan; and

"Whereas" the former Minister of Transportation "Frank Klees responded quickly to MPP Ted Arnott's request for a meeting with the councillors and staff of Waterloo-Wellington's municipalities, and listened to their recommendations; and

"Whereas the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan contains over 40 recommendations provided to MPP Ted Arnott by municipalities, and there is recurrent support for implementing the corridor study of Highway 7/8 between Kitchener and Stratford, a new four-lane Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph, assistance for Wellington county to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge, a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest, Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative, OSTAR funding for transportation-related projects and other projects;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government support Ted Arnott's Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, and initiate the necessary studies and/or construction of the projects in it."

It is signed by a significant number of my constituents.

## PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** I have a petition from the residents of Davenport, specifically Rusholme Road, Delaware Avenue and Dovercourt Road. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned property owners and tenants, strongly oppose the current value assessment system in Ontario. The 2003 current value assessment system is too high and we will show strong resistance. There may be a tax revolt.

"We believe the municipal tax system should reflect the following principles: (1) Ability to pay should be a consideration; (2) property taxes should be related to services 100%; (3) homeowners should not be penalized for improving their properties; (4) dependence on the residential property tax to raise provincial and municipal revenues should be reduced; (5) the assessment system should be stable over a long period of time—10 years; (6) the assessment system should be objective, accurate, consistent, correct, equitable and easily understood—house sf class price; lot sf class price, garage sf class price should also be considered; and (7) owner authorization should be approved through this assessment procedure."

I'm delighted to have presented this petition to you.

## ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the community of Yearley, Ontario, within the electoral district of Parry Sound-Muskoka experiences frequent and prolonged power outages; and

"Whereas the power outages have become a health and safety issue to the residents of the community and the students who visit the outdoor education centre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy instruct Hydro One to conduct an investigation of the distribution and feeder lines that serve Yearley, and take the necessary steps to ensure reliable energy to ongoing forestry maintenance and required line improvements."

I agree with this petition, and I sign my name to it.

## ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians."

I have affixed my signature to it.



## LANDFILL

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of Site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of Site 41 and the nearby water sources."

1510

## ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of seniors from Portal Village in Port Colborne concerning higher drug costs. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program, but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate, and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit

program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

I'm pleased to affix my signature beneath those of Joan Metler, Dorothy Tucker and Mary Parsons, among others.

## NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Nepean-Carleton has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning whether the Minister of Finance offered his resignation. The matter will be discussed at 6 pm.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE  
OF MEDICARE ACT, 2004LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ENGAGEMENT  
D'ASSURER L'AVENIR  
DE L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Mr Smitherman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / *Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.*

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm privileged today to have the opportunity to share my time with the members from Nipissing, Don Valley West and Etobicoke North, and if I don't speak fast enough, Ralph Goodale.

I'm honoured to rise in the House today to be the leadoff speaker on behalf of our government for the second reading of Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. This bill reflects the values of a new government, a new government that's prepared to do its part to build on one of our nation's great successes. I have said on many points and occasions that medicare is the best expression of Canadian values. It is the intention of this government to renew and transform medicare to make it sustainable for future generations.

I do very much want to acknowledge and personally thank my legislative colleagues on the standing committee on justice and social policy, those from all parties in the House, but I particularly would like to recognize the Chair, Kevin Flynn; the committee Vice-

Chair, Jim Brownell; and my parliamentary assistant, the member from North Bay.

No one has spoken as passionately and as persuasively on the future of medicare as Roy Romanow. His extraordinary report provides the playbook for transforming public health care. Mr Romanow laid out the challenge for all of us, and he laid it out this way: "Canada's journey to nationhood has been a gradual, evolutionary process, a triumph of compassion, collaboration and accommodation, and the result of many steps, both simple and bold.... That next step is to build on this proud legacy and transform medicare into a system that is more responsive, comprehensive and accountable to all Canadians."

That is what the future is, and that is what Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, is all about.

A review of Bill 8 and a read of the preamble is to see a core statement of our values, the values of medicare. It speaks to health care that is consumer-centred, it reflects a system that is accountable to the people who own it—each and every Ontarian. It calls for a system focused on outcomes and committed to quality. Bill 8 confirms the undeniable need for co-operation in health care between providers and government, individuals and communities, and it underscores the responsibility that we all have to build a strong, sustainable public health care system.

I want to talk today about our game plan for transforming medicare in the province of Ontario, and I want to talk about Bill 8, a key part of our transformation strategy.

The government that has been elected in Ontario, the McGuinty government, has brought a greater determination to the goal of transformation in our health care system. Some people say, in response to our plans, that it has been heard before. That is because it is an echo of the vision of Roy Romanow, but it is one that brings with it the determination of a new government in Ontario.

The stakes on this task are high and the cost of failure great; in fact, immeasurable. But we are confident that a better future of medicare lays within our grasp. It is within the leadership of the province of Ontario to demonstrate to the country that the future of medicare is indeed strong, that we can transform our medicare system to one that is of higher quality, that is patient-centred and delivers on principles of sustainability.

Our goal, to make it simple, is to say that we want to make Ontarians the healthiest Canadians. When we are successful at doing that, we will have contributed greatly to ensuring that the medicare system that we pass on to future generations is a sustainable medicare system.

The challenges are great. Those that we confront are great, because against many measures, the health of our population is not in the greatest shape. Historically, I have not been in the greatest shape either, so I try to stand as a role model and encourage Ontarians to take one extra step, to eliminate one extra cigarette, to lose a little weight, climb a few stairs and make that individual personal contribution that all of us must make if we are to restore our belief that medicare is the way to go, if we are to enhance the quality of the system that we have.

The challenges are great as well because we have an aging and growing population; demand caused by access to new technology; and we have some culture in our health care system, like running annual deficits in budgets of our hospitals.

There are forces chipping away at medicare. In fact, some of them are the head of new political parties in the House of Commons. Those people want to erode its principles. They want to narrow its reach, water down its protections and lower the quality of care that it delivers, all in the name of offering some alternative parallel system for those who have money.

It's time to leave behind the status quo, where we spend billions upon billions of dollars on health care but have no reliable means of measuring the outcomes gained from these precious dollars. We're all in this together, and together we owe it to the Ontario public to show them how good it can be when we all work together.

This is, to some great extent, about change versus the status quo. There are people—I see them and I hear them in our midst—who resist the change that is in Bill 8 because it's not the way we've always done it. But on October 2 of last year, the people of Ontario said to the people of this party and to Dalton McGuinty, who is now our Premier, that change is absolutely required.

Let me be blunt about this: At \$28 billion and growing, the public health care system is crowding out other government priorities like education and the environment. We know that we can't continue to do this. But to have a situation where we're crowding out other government priorities yet not delivering to the expectation level of Ontarians, even though we're spending 46% of program dollars, is I think a message that we must transform the medicare system in our province, transform it to sustainability, where sustainability is measured not only on our basis to be able to pay the bills, but measured on the quality of the care that we can provide.

I'm talking about the sustainability from the vantage point of the average Ontarian. Their question is: Will medicare be there for me when I need it? We have created a bill that enables us to take on these challenges head-on and restore the very best of health care, to answer, "Yes," to that question. Medicare in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario has a very, very bright future.

*Applause.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** Minister, just one moment. I remind guests in the galleries that we appreciate your attendance, but we would also appreciate it if you would not clap when the members do. Thank you.

**Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education):** It's hard not to.

1520

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** That was going to be my line.

Review after review, study after study, have only served to reinforce the notion that universal, single-payer, publicly funded health care continues to be the right way forward for Ontario and for Canada. But they also



concluded that, within that framework, major reform is required. Major reform we will bring, because this is a government of action, action on the most cherished public program of Canadians. Roy Romanow clearly concluded that we need to renovate our concept of medicare to adapt to today's realities.

The Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act represents an important signal to Ontarians—that the significant changes to come rest on a strong foundation of familiar values. While others of us might suggest that the only way forward is to abandon these principles and to throw up our hands and surrender, we will prove that health care reform can and must be consistent with these values. That is why Bill 8 builds on the principle of accountability. Romanow reaffirmed that health care is there for, and answerable to, its owners—12 million Ontarians—and that we all share a responsibility to protect it.

For those of us who have the honour of serving in health care, and the particular honour of serving Ontarians, of representing them, we are the province that must, to our nation, show the way forward for medicare. The reforms that we're undertaking here to transform our medicare system, to make it more patient-focused and more accountable, to deliver a higher-quality result—Ontario must lead the way, because Ontario has always led the way.

I had the opportunity on February 24 to outline for the people of the province of Ontario our government's transformation plan for health care. We faced the challenge, and we have the plan of making our health care system into one unified whole system driven by quality and centred on the consumer. I have taken to saying in the days since I was appointed minister that the more I look for a system, the less of a system I see. The fact of the matter is that, on a whole range of points, dollars have been sent from the government at Queen's Park to different and diverse pieces of our health care system, but they have not bought a system with those dollars because the strategic responsibility of the government of Ontario was not there. As a result, we have a fragmentation across electronic health records, as one example. We have created a mentality, a culture, in the health care system in our province that is silo after silo. I engage all of you, all members of this house and Ontarians, to be involved in the very necessary exercise of toppling those silos so that the patient, the consumer, can make their way in a more seamless fashion across our health care system.

At the heart of our transformation plan is a recognition that our hospitals have been asked to do more than they are best built to do. Our government's challenge and our government's priority will be to ask our hospitals to hold stable while we give them predictable funding—albeit at lower rates of growth than they've seen over the last five years when their budgets went up by 10%—so we can make those precious and desperately necessary investments in those complementary, community-based services, like providing a doctor in the neighbourhoods

where people need them; like making sure that community and mental health and addiction services that have not seen a penny of increase in their base budget since before Bob Rae's hair turned white, that they once again understand that we recognize, that the Dalton McGuinty government recognizes, their importance and the role that they play, the contribution that they make; that we make the necessary investments so that home care can provide, not only to keep our people independent and keep them in their homes as long as possible, but to support them in those very critical days following acute care stays.

This is the challenge that we face, but we will make those investments in those community-based services. Because of the work of my colleague from North Bay, and because of the commitment of this government, we will transform the long-term-care system in this province in a fashion that restores confidence that those 67,500 beds, each of them providing such a vital lifeline for an Ontarian—that we restore the sense of quality in those; that our most vulnerable citizens who are residing in long-term-care facilities will know that this government sees the critical importance of a properly functioning system of long-term care, one that gives us confidence. This is what we'll deliver upon.

First, we will bring that sustainability and renewed accountability to hospitals, because they are the anchor of our health care system. For our part, we acknowledge that for all of the talk that has come from previous governments about delivering sustainable and predictable funding to hospitals, it is not being delivered upon. We will not only do that, but we will tie that funding to results that matter to Ontarians: reduced wait times, better-quality care and human resources strategies that recognize that hospitals are bricks and mortar and that technology, while it matters, is not nearly as important to the health care delivery that comes from people. At the end of the day, health care is about people delivering services to people, and that's reflected in the fact that 80 cents on the dollar is spent on people, but our strategies around human resources have so far not properly reflected the incredible role that human beings are playing in making our medicare system so important to Canadians.

We ask hospitals to work with us and to work with each other, to connect with other parts of the system, like I mentioned earlier—home care, long-term care, family health care—and to take full advantage, to take greater advantage than we have so far, of the tremendous economies of scale to improve the way they manage their resources. On this point, I pause to say that those people who are threatened by the idea that hospitals that band together to buy bandages cheaper are somehow a threat to public health care are people whom I think are stuck in the status quo, and those people need to change. Because I'm not interested any longer in being part of a government that talks about a health care system but doesn't have a system that means that we can take advantage of the spending power of \$11 billion worth of hospitals.

Later on, I'll give you an example of how we can get a better bang for our buck, about some of the advantages that can flow from standardization. These are the benefits of a system; this is the medicare advantage. Yet for all of our huge spending power, we have failed time and time again to take advantage of those opportunities. But this government will not fail, because those precious dollars that can be saved from procurement policies that bring about, that take into consideration those economies of scale, that purchasing power, those dollars saved, those precious dollars saved will be driven back into the kind of health care that Ontarians need. A dollar saved on a bandage will be a dollar dedicated to reducing a wait time for cancer, for cardiac care, for hip and knee, for cataracts, and those dollars, those precious dollars, will be used to enhance those community supports that I just spoke about.

I want to recognize that government must change its behaviour toward hospitals as well. In the past, in the absence of stable, predictable funding, it has been more difficult for our hospitals to plan effectively, and sometimes that contributed to the deficit trap. Having clear rules for how hospitals are funded is an essential part of ensuring that they are given the resources to actually deliver the results expected of them. Hospitals have been working with government through the joint policy and planning committee on a new, more predictable method of funding hospitals that enables longer-term planning and links funding to quality results. This government will be the government that moves those discussions from the committee room or from the board room table, and puts them into practical application in hospitals across this province, because it is time to get on with it.

It is time to get on with delivering to Ontarians a sense that there is a government that wants to build a health care system that is integrated and of a higher quality. But accountability and predictability of funding must go hand in hand. Bill 8's accountability agreements clarify expectations in order to secure mutual benefits for both health providers and the Ontarians they serve. The accountability agreements are about a new mature relationship with our health care providers, a relationship that for the very first time ties funding to results, rewards good performance and has real consequences for poor performance. No part of the system can stand alone any longer. No one part can determine on its own what services it will provide, what outcomes it will achieve. The needs of the consumer, of the client, of the patient, should be the only determining factor.

1530

Let me take a moment to talk about how accountability agreements will work. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the insurer, will negotiate an accountability agreement with the boards of health care institutions to ensure that health care dollars are used to achieve quality outcomes for patients and the public. Outcomes will be patient-centred: wait times for a life-saving procedure, like cardiac care and cancer care. The agreements would reward those providers who deliver excellent

quality, and there would be real consequences for people who fail to meet their commitments.

It's funny how it seems that this is such a radical concept: the idea that, in exchange for a secure allotment of resources for which you've said you will deliver services, if you fail to do what you said you would do in a contractual obligation, there will be consequences for that. Some people have said that's radical. What I think is radical is that here in the province of Ontario, across the breadth of a \$28-billion system, the radical part is that this has not been done before, that we haven't tied expenditures to specific outcomes. We will, because we must.

There has been a fair bit of talk about what the former Minister of Health, the member from the Kitchener-Waterloo area, likes to refer to as my new sweeping powers. The expansion in ministerial powers in Bill 8 is an expansion of power so far below those that already exist, it's hard to understand what that member's getting at. Perhaps it's because she understands that the appointment of supervisors by her government was like a reflex action. Seven times out of nine since 1981, that government, the former minister from Waterloo and the former minister from Brampton, exercised the powers of appointing a supervisor.

Let's understand what that means. If you appoint a supervisor in an Ontario hospital today, it means that in one fell swoop you have eliminated the board and the CEO. They, in opposition to what we plan, have suggested that being able to seek accountability for performance is a radical concept. We need to move to a position where we drive the care down to the community.

I want to go back to a theme that I touched on earlier. Our hospitals have been put in an untenable position. They've been forced to pick up the pieces of the health care safety net that others weren't able to deliver effectively. They've been asked to do more than they were built to do or are best suited to do, but if we make those investments, as we fully intend to, in the complementary community pieces, we'll finally be getting to the point where we ask hospitals only to provide services that they're built to provide, because we know that hospitals are the most expensive places to deliver patient care. So we'll move on family health care, high-quality, accessible, around-the-clock, front-line care where people need care, as close to home as possible from an interdisciplinary team of health care providers. That's family health teams, and we're going to move on those.

Home care: We have real recognition that we need to do more on home care. As a result, in part measure, of the health accord of last year, we have some resources to do that, and we will. We're working on long-term-care facilities and on consumer-based mental health and addiction services, as I mentioned earlier.

Let me talk for a moment about integration. I talked a little bit before about silos. Other people talk about them as well as the predominant culture of our health care system, that if you only need to see a family practitioner and you have an established relationship, chances are



your level of support, your confidence level for the health care system is very high, but at the very moment you need to move from there to see a specialist, chances are that you butt up against the silo, another piece of the health care system. We need to topple the silos and make it easier for the patient to make the seamless transition along a continuum of care. We need to tear down those walls that stand between the patients and the care they need.

Information technology is an essential enabler, because it allows health care providers to speak in the same language and share information. It will revolutionize our ability to measure system performance. Bill 8, therefore, will foster integration.

One of the measures of quality for which providers and governments will be judged is how effectively we collaborate, how well we mobilize our collective resources for the common cause of quality, consumer-centred patient care. I've seen many examples of innovation and integration as I've travelled the province, and I want to speak briefly just about two of them.

On a gorgeous but crisp Friday afternoon on the northern reaches of Lake Superior, I went to visit the community of Terrace Bay. In Terrace Bay I heard about the Lake Nipigon regional health forum, an ad hoc network of five hospitals formed out of necessity 15 years ago, where hospitals have found, in the ability to work together, the capacity to offer much greater, expansive programs to the people of their very small community. They recognize that services, the cost of which could not be borne on one budget alone, could be borne by five hospitals working together. They innovate and share resources. They share physiotherapists and occupational therapists, as well as human resource management and administrative resources.

In the town of Windsor, from where my seatmate hails, two hospitals, which had a long history of working against one another, have in the last three years made extraordinary strides to work better together to integrate the care they provide and to share resources where it's practical, to save costs so those dollars can be driven into the provision of clinical services.

Last week I had the opportunity to meet with Jack Kitts, the CEO of the Ottawa Hospital, Ontario's largest hospital. Six different facilities have come together in a very challenging amalgamation. They got the orthopaedic surgeons together. At that point, they were using eight different devices for hips and knees. They narrowed the list to two. The result is that those enhanced volumes saved \$1.8 million in the purchase of artificial joints. That \$1.8 million bought 200 more surgeries for the Ottawa community.

Accountability matters because, as Roy Romanow says, it's a principle that was missing, and because the precious resources we have must be well spent. Shared accountability of government and providers to the Ontarians we serve is the message associated with accountability. It's very much a two-way street, and it's a two-way street because we must focus on continuous

improvement. I am tired of the idea too many people develop that all of sudden the expectation is that people will wake up one morning and say, as if by magic, "Health care is better." The challenge for all of us is to demonstrate to Ontarians that health care is in a state of continuous improvement. We cannot measure the state of health care, because at the moment we do not have a measuring stick, we do not have the tools. But in Bill 8 we have the tool: the Ontario Health Quality Council. It will report to Ontarians on an annual basis about the state of health care and about the state of their health.

Ontarians have never before had way of knowing how our health care system was performing. Ontarians are smart people and deserve to know the facts. They have a right to know what is happening with wait lists and about the state of our health care and about the state of our individual health. The Ontario Health Quality Council gives people this opportunity.

The council will provide Ontarians with meaningful information so they can measure our government's performance and hold us to account. The Ontario Health Quality Council exists to serve the broad and diverse interests of Ontarians by measuring across a broad array of indicators how our health care system is performing. We will, for once, finally have an annual, at-a-glance opportunity to measure how we're doing to mark the continuous improvement that we're involved in.

It will have strong representation brought by people from our communities, 12 of them, people of independence. I am, on this point, saddened that the former minister, the member from Waterloo, without even seeing names associated with this body, has already decided that those 12 individual Ontarians will not be capable of producing a report that is independent, balanced and provides Ontarians with the information they know. I believe that cynicism has no place if we are to be properly dedicated to the task at hand, because the task at hand is one where no failure is allowed, because the task at hand is our involvement with the most cherished program of Canadians.

Healthier Ontarians: Each of us has a role to play in this debate. I had the opportunity two weeks ago to speak to a grade 6 and 7 class in Markham. I said to those kids, "Start a revolution. Take back your health." I went in there and said that it was my 40th anniversary speech, having just celebrated my 40th birthday—which I have been getting quite a lot of mileage out of. I talked to those kids and said that I looked at some numbers from when I was their age and compared them to the numbers now: five times the rate of childhood obesity.

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I talked to those kids about personal responsibility. I said, "Society so far is not getting the job done for you." But we need all Ontarians to be more involved in the recognition that one of the greatest pressures that we have on our health care today is the pressure that is brought by the decisions that we made yesterday. So all of us have the opportunity today to begin to reinforce and develop better habits, and I take the motto of continuous



improvement upon myself as well. I encourage people to take a look for those opportunities inside your daily habits to make things just a little bit better.

Not everybody can quit smoking, but everybody can quit smoking some of what they smoke. Not everybody can get their weight under control, but most people can make a difference about it. Not everybody will become an athlete overnight, because not everybody has a former Canadian Olympian as their parliamentary assistant. But everyone can look for the opportunity to walk up one more set of stairs or to walk one extra block, because we must work together to tackle the high-cost, high-burden and preventable health issues: smoking and childhood obesity caused by inactivity and unhealthy eating habits.

I am so proud that our government is going to work on this with the kind of zeal that Ontarians have been waiting for, because we have a responsibility, an obligation, an opportunity, and we will live up to the challenge that the health and safety of our kids have for us to do. We will show that leadership. I am so pleased to have the opportunity to work with someone like Gerard Kennedy and my colleague Marie Bountrogianni as we seek in this province to create a healthier environment for our kids. Why? Not just because of course we wish that everyone would have the best health possible, but because 29% of \$28 billion—29% of \$28 billion—goes toward treating diabetes, cancer, cardiac care and other preventable diseases.

It's time for all of us to come together and take back our health. Each and every one of us can take real action to make Ontarians healthier. We want to fuel an excitement and a sense of personal mission about health. A healthy revolution is what is required in our province.

I'm proud of Bill 8, I'm proud of the McGuinty government and I'm proud to acknowledge that our government takes a different way of operating. That's what we bring to leadership in Ontario. I took responsibility when I brought the bill to committee. I took responsibility because the first draft didn't set the tone right, and in response, yesterday the former Premier was derisive because the bill had amendments. I say to the relics in that party: wouldn't it have been nice in their day if they had had the courage to take any bill to a legislative committee for the meaningful input of Ontarians and the meaningful debate among other parliamentarians.

We have worked hard to make sure that the tone matches the bill's purpose to inject new spirit and new life into medicare in Ontario.

Let me just tell you something of the key amendments approved by the standing committee on justice and social policy. The bill now clearly states that all health care decisions must be made in the public interest, something of great concern, especially to our friends at the Montfort hospital. We've made it explicit in the bill that trade unions, individual doctors and groups of doctors are not subject to accountability agreements. I witnessed through this debate the most curious of campaigns by CUPE, not satisfied with the fact that the bill, as originally written, didn't do anything about opening up contracts or forcing accountability agreements upon them.

In a meeting months and months ago, I said to Sid Ryan, "Listen, I'm happy to offer an amendment that will make it explicit on this point, just to satisfy you." For three or four months, Sid Ryan pretended that no such commitment had been made and revved and riled up the workers of CUPE all across this province in the most artificial campaign against the bill that I have ever seen, creating the illusion of threat where no threat existed. That has been the involvement of that organization on this bill.

This bill clearly defines the four providers that must enter into accountability agreements: hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community care access centres and independent health facilities. The bill states that accountability agreements will be negotiated between boards and the minister, that they're a shared contract. I'm also proud to say that the amended legislation clearly explains the steps available to health providers if we cannot reach an agreement together.

In contrast to the hammer used by the last government under the Public Hospitals Act of sending in supervisors to take over hospital boards and fire CEOs, Bill 8 takes a measured and fair approach to remedies designed to change behaviours. We ensured that bill 8 is consistent with Bill 31, the Health Information Protection Act, for the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information. I'm pleased to say to all members and to all Ontarians that our door continues to be open. We'll work, we'll listen to the debate and to the dialogue and look for opportunities consistent with our values to enhance the quality of that bill.

In the same spirit of openness, we've committed to 60 days of consultations with the public about regulations. I again want to thank Kevin Flynn and the rest of the committee for the great work they did. I want to repeat that we all have a responsibility not just to sustain medicare but to drive new life into it. I believe that we have that responsibility to Ontarians, and I am certainly encouraged by the work that Roy Romanow did that guides us in our transformation of medicare. We must pull together and move in the same direction. We in Ontario must show the way for the rest of the country, and in order to do so we must finally create a health care system in this province because Ontarians want results. They want progress and real, positive change in health care. They want a health care system that's public, universal and accessible, and they want a health care system that is accountable.

Just over four decades ago, courageous men and women created Canada's most cherished and defining social program. The torch has been passed on to us. All of us in this Legislature have a crucial responsibility to sustain and protect medicare. Ontario is leading the way in the transformation of health care in Canada. I challenge and encourage all of you to join with us as we reach out, take up that charge and demonstrate that medicare is not something about yesterday, it is not simply about today, but has a bright, long future for tomorrow in Ontario and in Canada. Thank you very much.



**Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing):** I am pleased to rise today in support of our government's Bill 8, our commitment to the future of medicare. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable George Smitherman, who has guided and led this bill since its introduction with the aim of preserving and protecting the kinds of fundamental health care values that we know Ontarians hold dear. I would like to thank the minister for his challenge to those of us in the Legislature who could do a little work on our health care as well.

We have much to be proud about today. Since Bill 8 was introduced for first reading in the Legislature, I have had the privilege of leading the government through legislative committee hearings. We travelled across this great province, we listened and we learned. I would like to join with the minister in thanking the members of this Legislature who participated in these hearings across the province. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff who assisted us in these hearings across the province, both from the clerk's office and the Ministry of Health.

We heard from no fewer than 110 delegations and individuals from all parts of the province, all with different and varying perspectives to share. We visited Sudbury, Windsor, Ottawa, Niagara Falls and of course Toronto. Members of 27 hospital boards shared their concerns and views on the accountability provisions contained in this legislation, and as the minister has said, we have come a long way in addressing many of these concerns. We heard from the unions and union organizers—24, in fact—who were concerned about their collective agreements: We have made it clear that Bill 8 would not apply to trade unions and would not affect their collective agreements. We heard from 36 health care professional organizations, such as the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Chiropractic Association, physiotherapists and social workers, who shared some of their concerns and the concerns of their members.

Our ability to work together to create improvements to part II of the bill, especially where the OMA had some significant concerns, was constructive and produced positive results. Individuals—interested Ontarians and individual health professionals—along with other social and political organizations, made up the balance of our deputants. Some spoke of their personal experience and some of their deep concerns. Many offered suggestions for improvement—suggestions that were included in the amendments we brought forward a couple of weeks ago.

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As the minister did in his remarks, I want to thank these individual Ontarians and organizations for taking such an active role in our democratic process and for sharing their very important views with us during this public consultation process. This government appreciates such diversity of opinion. We appreciate their time, we appreciate their input and we were glad to have given them the opportunity to provide us with this input.

It is this diversity of opinion, as well as the ongoing dialogue between government and its stakeholders, that led to 63 amendments to Bill 8 being passed by the legislative committee a couple of weeks ago. These important amendments, which the minister referred to, clarified and strengthened the intent of the legislation, and Bill 8 is now stronger, is now a better piece of legislation and is legislation that we can all be proud of.

We, as Liberals, believe that public health care is the best kind of health care. The health of our people is our most precious resource. The Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act will provide enduring protection for publicly funded, universal medicare in this province. We've actively listened to our health care partners and to the many viewpoints presented in consultations. As a result, we have developed stronger legislation that remains true to its intent to preserve medicare in Ontario and to focus on patients' needs in Ontario.

Through this legislation our government is creating the Ontario Health Quality Council, an independent objective body reporting on the performance of the health care system to the public so that we can make sure that tax dollars are not being wasted.

As well, Bill 8 will entrench accountability as a central principle in Ontario's health care system. Accountability agreements will be negotiated between the government and the boards of health resource providers, being hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community care access centres and independent health facilities. This means that performance measures will be clearly spelled out. There will be clarity on what is required to meet the needs of patients and ensure the greater public good. New negotiated accountability agreements between health resource providers and the government will result in a common and improved understanding of the results government expects them to deliver to patients, such as hiring more full-time nurses and shorter wait times.

As we have stated on numerous occasions, Bill 8 does not apply to trade unions. It will not change the existing legal protection for collective agreements. Bill 8 is not intended to interfere with collective bargaining or undermine collective agreements.

The concept of the public interest, similar to the existing principles in the Public Hospitals Act, is included in the revised legislation to guide the government in entering into accountability agreements and enforcing accountability agreements.

Explicit provisions have been added through our amendments around due process to deal with any difficulties associated with negotiating an accountability agreement or to deal with any instances of non-compliance. While the minister may still issue a compliance directive or an order for non-compliance, that can only be done after following these comprehensive due process procedures. These directives are graduated and have been outlined in the legislation, instead of regulation.

We believe that Bill 8 is a strong bill that will provide enduring protection for publicly funded, universal health care in this province. We still have work to do on the

regulations, and we will commit to consult with the public on these regulations. We will have a 60-day consultation process for parts I and III of the bill.

As we move through the legislative process with this cornerstone piece of health care legislation, we will be continuing to dialogue with our health care partners. The minister is right when he says that Ontarians want results and that they want progress in health care.

My experience in seeing Bill 8 through its various stages has been a good one, an interesting one, an impressive one. I was particularly impressed by the commitment of our health care partners to improving this piece of legislation. The 110 presentations we received were well thought out, they were passionate, they were thoughtful, and due to our health care partners, we have an improved bill to present to this House for second reading.

I am proud of how far our government has come with this legislation in signalling our commitment to an improved, strengthened and more accountable health care system.

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** Thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 8 in the House today. I see Bill 8 as the beginning of substantial change and important planned change in the health care system. I was at a school in my riding—Gateway—two weeks ago, and one of the grade 5 students asked me what was annoying about my job. I said that, well, there really isn't anything annoying, because I really love my job. But what's upsetting is how slowly things change. I think that real, substantial change in the health care system that's going to fundamentally retool the system has been slow to come, and we've been talking about it for a very long time.

In fact, I can go back to no less than Tommy Douglas more than 20 years ago, who asked the question of how to reorganize a health care system that is lamentably out of date. He said that the goal of medicare must be to keep people well rather than just patching them up when they get sick. That means making hospitals available for active treatment cases, getting chronic patients out into nursing homes, carrying on home nursing programs that are much more effective. It means providing physical fitness through sports and other activities. All these programs should be designed to keep people well, because in the long run it's cheaper than the current practice of only treating them after they become sick. That could have been said, and was said, today by our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

So I think what we're talking about is really moving on some things that we have had on the back burner for a long time and fundamentally making change. That means complexity. That means a complex interaction with health care providers. But the promise of a health care system designed around promoting a healthier citizenry is a noble goal, and we have to go there. So I'm proud to speak on this bill, because I think with the implementation of Bill 8, we're getting started on that kind of change.

Without meaningful accountability, the ability to plan for expenditures and the necessary accountability in place to make sure those expenditures are followed through on, we can't make the changes we need to make. If we don't establish a role for government in making sure that hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community care access centres and independent health facilities meet objectives; if we don't ensure that there's a mechanism for regular, system-wide review; and if, in short, we don't put into place all of those things this bill lays out, then we cannot make the kind of change we want to make, the fundamental change that asserts the values of the Canada Health Act and adds accountability. That's why this bill is so important.

Each of us is familiar with the increase of the health budget, and we know that we have to deal with that. If the government doesn't control what it spends on health and the results it gets for spending, then it doesn't control the health care system at all. If it doesn't control the system, it can't reform the system. That's really what's at the core of this bill for me. I think it fits into our broader mandate of reforming our health system and retaining public control.

With that much at stake, it's not surprising that there were people who were jarred by some of the language of this bill. The parliamentary assistant, Monique Smith, has indicated some of the problems that people brought to us, and the fact that the committee—and I sat on that committee; I travelled with the committee—heard those delegations. We listened and made many of the changes they asked for. That's what consultation is about.

I think one of the issues that we're dealing with as a government is that the interaction between the public and the government has to be retooled. It's not just our services that have to be retooled, but that relationship has to be retooled. People in Ontario expect that they're going to have unilateral decisions imposed. They don't expect that we're going to talk to them, listen to them and act on their concerns.

So it was a great privilege for me to work with the minister, the parliamentary assistant and the rest of committee as we listened to people talk about this bill. I think that a lot of the concerns that were brought to us have been allayed. Both people who spoke before have spoken to that.

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I want to tell you a particular story about my own life, because I think it demonstrates the kinds of attitudes and assumptions that we're going to have to shift if we're going to make changes. I come from a family of family practitioners, two generations of family practitioners. In 1979, I moved to Holland. I left Canada to live in the Netherlands. When I arrived in Voorburg, outside The Hague, I was five months pregnant with my first child. One of my first missions upon arriving in Holland, after I took my Dutch lessons, was to find a doctor who would provide prenatal care and deliver my baby. I was directed to the health service in the community in which we lived and then to the doctor who had responsibility for our



neighbourhood. So the first culture shock was that I didn't get to choose my doctor. I had to go to the doctor who was responsible for our neighbourhood. Then the second culture shock was that that doctor didn't deliver babies, because in Holland midwives deliver babies. At that time, 25% of women had their babies at home. You could stay in the hospital if you wanted to, but why would you do that? You would stay in your home.

The point I'm trying to make is that in the three years I lived in the Netherlands I had two children, they had their fair share of colds and fevers, and apart from one surgical intervention on my second child, I only saw a family physician a couple of times. Health care was delivered in a cinder-block clinic down the street. There were nurse practitioners, there were therapists and there were midwives. Those were the people who delivered the primary care.

I know that Bill 8 is not technically about that specific reorganization, but it sets the groundwork for that kind of change. Unless we fundamentally make these changes to our large institutions and interact with them in a different way, we're not going to get to that other kind of fundamental change. That's really why I am supporting this bill. Because when I started out in Holland, I was an obnoxious 27-year-old who was set in her ways, and I believed there was only one way for my care to be undertaken. By the time I left, I was a complete convert and I came back here as a zealot and read the riot act to my family practitioner.

We can change, but it's going to take a very hard and complex conversation. Bill 8 is the beginning of that. It's an honest first step at retooling the health care system and getting at the core of helping people to be healthier and helping health care dollars go where they can prevent illness and we can, as a community, create that system the Minister of Health is talking about. I look forward to being part of a government that's going to implement that.

**Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North):** The Honourable Minister of Health, George Smitherman, his parliamentary assistants and my colleagues in this House, first of all, for a moment I'd like to add a perspective as a member not only of the Smitherman health care team and a member of the McGuinty government but also, in my civilian life, as a practising family physician, a family doctor. I would like to say that it is a great honour and privilege to be here in this time, in this place, in this Legislature, to be part of a bill of a government that's moving forward the law to enshrine medicare in Ontario. It is something that I feel a great deal of pride about, and I look forward to sharing this with my own children when they become of age to actually understand what we are doing here for the benefit of all Ontarians.

In particular, I feel that enshrining medicare into law is really a mark of our Canadian society—a just society, the phrase of Trudeau; a civil society, the phrase that we attempt to live up to—the ideal. As a multicultural Ontarian, for example, I can tell you firsthand that you do not have to go too far out of the confines of this province

and out of Canada to see health care systems of a very different nature, that pit groups against each other; that only cater to the upper levels, the upper strata of society; that are really not, as our minister has said, consumer-centred and based on need.

In particular, for example, my family hailing originally from Chicago, Illinois, I can tell you that the Americanized system that exists currently in the United States is not the direction that Ontario should go to, and with Bill 8 that directional change is enshrined into law. For example, I think it's very clear that the underlying philosophy of the previous regime, of the previous junta that spent eight years in a stealth privatization of every public sector area that you could care to name, whether it was hydro or health care or the highways and so on, is not the direction and the vision of this government. In particular, for example—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott):** I would ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary comment.

**Mr Qaadri:** I withdraw, sir.

The Americanization of Ontario that was before us under the previous regime is not the direction of the government of Ontario. In particular, we in Ontario believe that we actually are going to foster health care and not wealth care, that individuals, when they come to our doctors' offices or to other settings, will be asked only for their health card and not their credit cards. For example, if you are in Chicago, Illinois, and you happen to have an emergency—let's say you have right lower quadrant abdominal pain and it may be a potential flare-up of appendicitis—you'll be brought by an ambulance to a local hospital. But the first question is not, "How is your fever?" or "How is your pain?" or "How long have these symptoms developed?" The first question that you will be asked, sir, and the people of Ontario, is about your coverage, your insurance, essentially your wealth status, your pecking order on the socio-economic ladder. If you're on the wrong side of the tracks, as many individuals who are, say, in Cook county in Chicago are, you will be referred elsewhere irrespective of your need or the volume of blood loss or whatever consideration you might happen to make. That is not the vision we are holding here in Ontario and it is not the vision of the Liberal McGuinty government.

In particular, for example, it was under the Tory regime that a number of scans from the realm of radiology—MRIs and CT scans and others—were allowed to undergo a stealth privatization. We got to the point where there were even individuals paying extra, upwards of \$800, \$900, \$1,200, \$1,500, for immediate access to the scans they wanted.

I have with me, for example, an ad from one of the American companies that was setting up shop at that time that actually invites you to bring a friend and have two scans and have a discount offered of various rates of, say, \$100 to \$200. That will become outlawed entirely with Bill 8, our commitment to medicare. I think that is the great direction and the great vision that our minister and our government are showing.



In particular, one of the aspects of the American system has led, as you rightly know, Speaker—more people in the United States than the entire population of Canada do not have any form of health coverage whatsoever. As an example, if you have chest pain and you are undergoing cardiac care, cardiac testing, and it is later found that you will actually require quadruple or quintuple cardiac bypass surgery, a heart operation, that can cost anywhere upwards of \$30,000 to \$40,000 to \$50,000, especially when you mix in the after-care. This is a threat to the security of individuals. This is a threat, I may even say from an economic viability point of view, to the citizenry of huge groups and huge populations in the United States, and that is what we are attempting to outlaw fully with this commitment-to-medicare act.

There are a number of worthy elements of Bill 8. I, as a family doctor who of course very strongly believes in preventive care, especially salute our minister and his advisers and his deputies, and the ADMs in particular, who have helped to orchestrate and to lead to the worthy point of this bill: an attempt to fully utilize the health resources of Ontario, whether it is the Telehealth lines or the various hospitals or the long-term-care facilities or the community care access centres or the independent health facilities.

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I am particularly pleased to know that one of his parliamentary assistants, MPP Peter Fonseca, is in charge of prevention and promotion. I think that, going forward, we can, in particular, devote a great deal of energy, time and resources to better the health of Ontarians. The vision is starting off right here in Bill 8, our commitment-to-medicare act.

I had an opportunity to visit some of our family friends in the United States, actually, not in Chicago but elsewhere. As we were discussing our varying health care systems they brought to my attention that they have the equivalent of RMSPs. In the same way, for example, that we in Canada may have registered retirement savings plans or even now RESPs, registered education savings plans, they have medical savings plans because, without the appropriate level of coverage, without appropriate finances that are prespoken for, they live in fear.

I would like once again, Speaker, to let you know, and through you the people of Ontario, why I am so proud to be a member of this team of the McGuinty government and of the health care team led by the Honourable George Smitherman to fully outlaw the two-tier, pay-as-you-go, pay-to-the-front-of-the-line wealth care, because that is not in the direction that I see as the best and in the major interest of people of Ontario. I say that as the MPP for Etobicoke North, as a parliamentary assistant, as a legislator and as a family doctor.

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** I've enjoyed the opportunity to listen to the minister and parliamentary assistant and other members of government. I think it's important to acknowledge the fact that, I think, all people in this House support the key prin-

ciples of the Canada Health Act. I think everyone supports accountability and I think everyone agrees that there is a need to preserve the universal public health system that exists in the province of Ontario. I don't think anybody is opposed to any of those principles or any of those values. I think that's important to get on the record.

I don't think health is a partisan issue. In fact, I have to tell you, as I listen to the comments of Mr Smitherman and I listen to his vision for health care, I could go back to our first years in government when we had the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

Much of what this government is trying to do builds on the foundations of reform that we put in place. We, as you know, undertook the restructuring of our health care system. As a result, we put in place the family health networks, we introduced community care, we expanded the number of long-term-care beds in the community. We also focused on promotion and the prevention of disease and illness in the province. I can remember the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program that I put in place, the preschool speech and language, the Alzheimer's strategy and the heart health program.

What we are doing is, we are moving forward. We are moving forward in a way that we can provide for the people in the province of Ontario the best health care system, but we need to do so in an efficient and an economical manner. We need to make sure that, no matter where you live in this province, you have access to health care. We also need to make sure that, no matter the size of your wallet, you have the same access to health care. So, you know what, folks? This isn't any different than where we've been going since 1995. We will continue to build on that foundation and move forward.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I'm going to have a chance to make some more extensive comments later, but I want to respond to three things the minister said.

First of all, the minister would have you believe that nothing in the bill is less than what's currently in place—nothing more or nothing less. I want to remind the minister—contrary to what he said—that when a supervisor went to the Sudbury Regional Hospital less than 18 months ago, the board stayed in place and so did the CEO. They were not removed. Your bill, however, certainly allows for those provisions to happen. They are very extreme and they are very draconian.

For those of you who don't like to hear that or don't believe me, I'm just going to read into the record some of the comments of a former Liberal minister, Bernard Grandmaître, who appeared before us in Ottawa with Montfort Hospital. I'd be interested to hear what he says now. "As a Liberal, I have seen better days. This law, Bill 8, is not the product of the Liberal Party that I know. In fact, it is in flagrant contradiction to some of the most basic principles that" have inspired my party. "This bill is a serious breach of confidence and of democratic principles. And like Mrs Lalonde, it is hard for me to believe that this is being done by a Liberal government."

I don't suspect that his position has changed, because the position with respect to the draconian powers of the



minister to impose an accountability agreement have not changed, nor have the provisions with respect to the minister being allowed to claw back compensation of the CEO been changed. Those fundamental provisions, which Montfort talked about, have not changed.

Secondly, the minister talked about citizen support for publicly funded health care services. Citizens do support that. My question is, why doesn't the Liberal government? Because you've got P3 hospitals that are not publicly financed, but privately, which means that money that should be going into patient care is going to go directly into the profits of the private sector consortium. That is a waste of health care dollars when we need those dollars the most.

The minister was correct when he said some forces are chipping away at medicare. They are. Some of those forces are in this Legislature, sitting across from me in this government. The longer you continue with P3 hospitals and do nothing about the private MRI clinics and do nothing about competitive bidding in home care, the longer—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. I recognize the member for Ottawa-Orléans.

**Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans):** I was very pleased to be part of the committee for three days as it went around the province to Ottawa, Windsor and for a short time in Toronto.

I will speak to one element only of Bill 8, and that's the accountability agreement. Health care is using up 46 cents of every program dollar this province spends. From another perspective, health care costs about \$6,900 for every family of three in this province, and these costs are rising by about \$500 per year. That's not sustainable.

Health care expenditures in Ottawa, like other cities in Ontario, are about the same as a city spends for all municipal services the city of Ottawa delivers. We're talking about equal budgets. Yet look at the level of oversight for that budget: 22 elected members of council. In Ottawa, the oversight of the hospital was carried out by an appointed board and an administrator, then by a provincial supervisor.

I strongly support Minister Smitherman's bill, this government's Bill 8. It is time we have accountability agreements entrenched in the provision of health care in this province. It is also time that hospital deficits be a thing of the past. This is about controlling the costs of health care and delivering better health care. All health care providers have to be part of the solution, not part of the problem, and that includes this government.

I am impressed with the presentations the committee heard across the province. We have heard from people across Ontario. Health care delivery models exist across Ontario. Best practices exist across Ontario, second to none in the world. We can build on those best practices in the province through excellent management, strong accountability and evolving best practices.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I am pleased to make a few comments on Bill 8. My first comment today is that this is a lucky day for Ontarians. First of all,

the man who gutted health care in Canada, Paul Martin, is about to deliver his first budget as the Prime Minister. With all the promises he's made and the scandals he's going through right now, I am sure there is going to be all kinds of money returned to health care, to these Liberal governments. Remember, Mr McGuinty has joined the Premiers' health council and we're going to see all kinds of money flow back into the health care system as a result of that fine connection between the federal government and the provincial government, between Dalton McGuinty and the scandal-ridden Paul Martin.

Second of all, I want to hear very carefully the comments and some of the responses on the second reading of Bill 8. I am certainly hoping, with the number of concerns I have heard from doctors, from hospital boards, from executive directors of hospitals, CEOs, treasurers of hospitals, that we will see more public hearings on this particular piece of legislation. It's a good opportunity for the minister to stand here this afternoon and actually announce that he will have more committee hearings after the debate taking place here today.

I look forward to the comments of the former Minister of Health, a person who has done a tremendous amount of work toward the health care of our province, Elizabeth Witmer. She's about to make her comments.

I appreciate the opportunity to make these comments today.

1620

**The Acting Speaker:** I now recognize the Minister of Health—two minutes to respond.

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I'm honoured to have that chance. I want to thank everybody who has participated in this debate so far, especially those who will have the opportunity to do so. I think it's a great debate. It's a great debate about the future of health care in our province. I want to say that it's a debate made more pleasant by the opportunity to have it in front of someone whom I consider a health care hero. That's Doris Grinspun from the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario.

I want to thank the members from Kitchener-Waterloo, from Nickel Belt, Ottawa-Orléans and Simcoe North for their involvement today.

I want to make two points very specifically to the member from Nickel Belt, maybe three. First, I think it's incumbent upon you, if you're going to read stuff into the record, to have the most current stuff available. I met face to face with the chair of the board, with the CEO and a variety of other board members at the Montfort and said in my remarks that we had made considerable progress with them.

Second, that party's history, when they were the government, was that they implemented independent health facilities, which are the private delivery of publicly funded service in this province. That is their record; that will be their record. They like to deny it's their record, but it was the case, and they certainly didn't re-entrench or purchase back services that were then being delivered

in the private domain. So a little clarity on the record would be helpful there.

I think it's also helpful to indicate that while not all supervisors are appointed in such a fashion that they eliminate both the CEO and the board, it certainly did happen, has happened, under the previous government, which makes the point, I think rather well, that I will finish on.

Ontario's hospitals are managed by the most highly paid public servants in the province of Ontario. They have enormous pressures, and they have a lot of obligation placed upon them. The scenario that we've outlined with respect to dealing with their compensation is such that if there is an accountability provision that they haven't lived up to, we'll seek that accountability through the board; and if the board is unable or unwilling to do it, this Minister of Health reserves the right, on behalf of Ontarians, to do that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much. Further debate on Bill 8?

**Mrs Witmer:** I am pleased to have the opportunity to join in this debate, although I thought that in the minister's final remarks, he was either hoisting a red flag or throwing out a challenge to the hospitals. I think they've certainly tried to demonstrate their accountability and their responsibility, and I know they're looking forward to working with the minister in collaboration and hopefully it won't be in a negative fashion.

Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, was introduced by Minister Smitherman on November 22, 2003. This bill has five components, but I want to focus today primarily on part II, which deals with health services accessibility, and part III, which deals with the accountability of health care providers. Therein lies much of the problem with this bill, because the accountability only goes one way. There is not mutual accountability in this bill. It is not a two-way street for the government and the health care providers, despite what the minister may say.

I think it's important to note that there were, as I think we've already heard today, approximately 110 delegations which found that there were various concerns that they had with the bill. In fact, I would hasten to say they pointed out some very, very serious concerns with the bill. They did refer to this bill as draconian; they referred to it as badly flawed, hastily drafted; and they really came forward hoping that the government would be responsive to the concerns that they expressed.

Now, I think in all fairness I need to acknowledge that the government certainly has made some amendments to the bill, but I think it is most regrettable that the government, when we went through clause-by-clause, was not able, willing, to accept or consider any of the amendments that were put forward by the opposition. I think that if this government is what they claim to be—a government that is open, that is transparent, that wants to consult and wants to have meaningful debate—they would have at least seriously considered some of our amendments.

Based on the fact that this bill still does not go as far as it should in addressing the legitimate concerns of our stakeholders, this government and this minister should immediately commit to further hearings on this bill after second reading. I hope we will soon have that expression of goodwill.

We have heard that this government is all about meaningful debate. Well, I would just say to the government that to have meaningful debate, to have discussion, to have consultation, involves more than just listening; you actually have to move forward and you need to address the concerns you are hearing. In this respect, this government has not gone far enough.

I want to emphasize that there was no one who appeared before the committee who did not support the key principles of the Canada Health Act. Everyone supports those principles. Indeed, everyone supports the need for accountability. But again, it's not just accountability for the health care providers; it's mutual accountability between the government and the health care providers. Again, I want to emphasize that everybody wants to preserve a universal public health care system in the province of Ontario. So there was no dispute. The only dispute was that within the bill there were serious drafting errors, and we heard people say that those drafting errors, which in many cases have not been corrected, will undermine the government's commitment to medicare. As you know, the bill is entitled the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, and regrettably, there are many who feel that it is going to do exactly the opposite.

I think this bill probably could have avoided those drafting errors if the legislation had been put out to the public, if there had been some consultation before the introduction of the bill. Regrettably, it was introduced into the House and there was a complete lack of consultation. It is for that reason that I would encourage the government to have further hearings after second reading.

I would also say that I think the minister said this was the first government to do this. I think if you look back, we did something quite similar. We were always prepared to go out for consultation. If he takes a look at the mental health legislation that we put in place, I can tell you it was put together in such a way that it reflected the concerns and the ideas of all parties in this House; in fact, all people in the province of Ontario. I have to publicly thank Richard Patten from the Liberal Party, who was a big influence in the drafting of that bill. I guess it is interesting that in that case we did go out early and have consultation. I can also tell you that, unlike the Liberals, who refused to accept any of the opposition amendments, we were quite willing to incorporate some of the ideas that certainly came from the opposition party, and in particular Mr Patten. I think that's important.

So who is still concerned about the bill? Well, I think just about every one of the stakeholders we have heard from still has some reservations about the amended bill.



We heard from hospitals—many, many hospitals—we heard from doctors, we heard from nurses, we heard from social workers, we heard from unions and we heard from many, many others.

1630

I want to begin now by taking a look at the objectives of the bill. When the bill was introduced, the minister said in a press release that this bill would make universal public medicare the law in Ontario. We would slam the door shut on two-tier. Well, you know, ladies and gentlemen, the Canada Health Act already does that. It's interesting that I didn't hear the minister say today that it was going to shut the door on two-tier. He also said in the press release it was going to put an end to the creeping privatization of the system. I also didn't hear him talk a lot about that, and I guess that's because the P3 hospitals in place at the present time in Ottawa and Brampton will continue to move forward as originally planned. In fact, the government is even musing about having more P3 hospitals.

If that is indeed the case, I think if this government is really trying to eliminate two-tier, they need to recognize that there is a key issue that fuels two-tier, and it's not addressed at all in this bill. In fact, it's probably the one issue that generated the most interest and concern overall. What fuels the drive for two-tier care, if indeed that is the issue, is waiting lists. So if you're going to commit to the elimination of two-tier medicare and if you're going to commit to the protection and sustainability of public health care, as the minister has said today, it's going to require much more than the motherhood statements that have been made by this government in press releases. It's going to require an actual plan, an actual strategy to address the growing waiting lists, and I'll talk about those later.

Unfortunately, this bill does not address the issue of waiting lists. The public understands that and the public is concerned. In fact, the public identified some of the concerns about the bill, and I want to tell you what their initial reactions to the legislation were. I want to first quote the Haliburton Highlands Health Services, which stated, "To this end, we have reviewed Bill 8, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, and believe that it is flawed. As written, portions of Bill 8 could significantly undermine the government's intent to protect medicare in Ontario."

What did the Ontario Medical Association say? They said in their presentation, "This bill has nothing to do with improving accessibility since it ignores the real problems in the system: chronic underfunding and a lack of resources."

Similarly, the Ontario Association of Social Workers stated that "as it stands, the bill may not further the implementation of the principles of the Canada Health Act nor provide" improved "democracy, transparency or"—a key word—"accountability."

St Michael's Hospital stated during their presentation: "We feel that Bill 8 goes far beyond what is required to meet accountability goals—particularly given overlaps

with existing legislation. Bill 8 can be seen as lack of trust in hospitals and hospital boards to live up to their responsibilities."

Finally, I have two more quotes, one from the Capital Health Alliance, which stated, "Given the way the bill is drafted, we believe that the bill will have the opposite effect and fundamentally undermine medicare in Ontario."

Finally, the Speak Out for Kids network believes that Bill 8 "will fundamentally undermine medicare in Ontario." Specifically, they have concerns with the sections addressing accountability and accessibility. Furthermore, they say, in regard to accessibility, that "the bill does not set wait times to ensure timely access to care."

So these, ladies and gentlemen, are the voices of the hard-working and committed professionals, parents and volunteers throughout the province of Ontario. These statements express some of the concerns we've heard about this legislation which, I continue to remind you, persist even after committee deliberations and the government amendments. That's why there is a need for additional committee hearings to address these concerns.

I want to begin now to look at other concerns that were expressed by delegations who came to the committee or who sent in their submissions.

I want to begin with the preamble. I indicated at the outset that, despite the fact that this government claims to be involved in meaningful discussions, they refused to entertain or incorporate any of the opposition amendments. There were three amendments we introduced that I believe need to be carefully considered by the government. I think those amendments would strengthen the preamble to provide for timely and quality care.

The first amendment that I want to speak to was where we wanted to add, "We believe that the government and health resource providers must work collectively to ensure that the health system provides quality and timely care to patients." I believe such an amendment in the preamble would have recognized the shared responsibility that the government and the health resource providers have to ensure accessibility, to ensure that all Ontarians, no matter where they live, no matter how old they are, receive quality and timely care. I believe both parties, government and the health care providers, must be committed to ensuring quality and timely care. However, the government refused to support that motion.

The second motion we introduced was: "Support negotiated accountability agreements between the government and health resource providers that enhance the accountability of both the government and health resource providers." This amendment to the preamble would recognize that accountability needs to be mutual, that it is a shared responsibility and extends to everyone within the health system, not just the health care providers; it also needs to be taken into consideration and be a shared responsibility of the government. Again, that motion was lost.

However, I think the most shocking loss of an amendment to the preamble was an amendment that had been

recommended by those in the field of mental health. Mental health is an area where I began a process of reform, and that process, the minister has indicated, will continue to move forward. I hope it will, because in many ways it is a neglected area. What I tried to add to the bill, which was voted down by the members on the committee from the government side, was to recognize that the promotion of health and the prevention of disease includes both mental and physical illness. You see, the preamble today speaks only to the promotion of health and the prevention of disease in regard to physical illness. The government refused to recognize the importance of addressing the promotion of health and the prevention of disease when it comes to mental illness. So when the minister stands up today and tells me and the public in the province of Ontario that they're going to move forward with mental health reform, I tend to be dubious. I tend to be doubtful.

I hope this government will reconsider that motion. I hope they will reconsider all these motions to the preamble that were put forward. That we need to recognize all of this is extremely important, and I don't know why they chose not to recognize that the promotion and prevention of mental illness is as important as the promotion and prevention of physical illness.

1640

Let's turn now to the health council—this is part I of the bill. In the speech from the throne, the government stated: "New legislation will be introduced to create a new health quality council. This independent council will report directly to Ontarians on how well their health care system is working—and how well their government is working to improve health care. Your new government understands it can only hold others to a higher standard if it subjects itself to the same standard."

Regrettably, the government has broken the promise they made in the speech from the throne. We do not have—this legislation does not create—a new, independent health council that will report directly to Ontarians on how well their health system is working. In fact, it's not even going to be in a position to tell the government how they can improve the health care system. So the government obviously doesn't want, as it claims in the throne speech—you know, it understands it can only hold others to a higher standard if it subjects itself to the same standard, because it's not subjecting itself to a review by the health quality council.

In fact, what this council is going to do, according to Bill 8, is draft a report and give it to the minister, and the minister in turn will table the report in the Legislature. We all know what happens to those reports, because we see them every day: nothing. This health council has no power. It doesn't have the power to hold the government accountable and responsible. It's not going to tell us how well our health system is doing. So again we have a broken promise.

I can tell you that most of the people who made representation to the committee said that this council, if it's to have any teeth, should be able to make recom-

mendations directly to the Legislature. That is the only way we can ensure we have in this province the highest standard of care and the greatest protection of patient safety. Well, I introduced an amendment to that effect, and it was defeated by the government. I guess they don't care about providing the highest standard of care and patient safety.

I want to turn now to part II, which deals with health services accessibility. The minister has mused from time to time and indicated in press releases and other statements that he wants to stop queue-jumping and privatization. If it is the intention to do that through Bill 8, then he and the government must address the issue of wait times. They need to reduce the wait times, and they need to improve access to health care.

I remind this government that we did focus on reducing wait times. I remind them that we did slash the waiting times for MRI and CT scans in Ontario. We nearly tripled the number of these machines, from 57 to about 151 in eight years. We built a province-wide computerized cardiac care network that has reduced the wait time for cardiac surgery in half since 1996. We made major investments to help reduce waiting times for Ontarians during emergencies. We invested about \$375 million into providing support and additional spaces for nurses in the province of Ontario, and we did that with the support of the nursing organizations.

I want to recognize the leadership of Doris Grinspun, who is here today, who is with the RNAO, because it is important that all of us work with the health resource providers. If we're going to do something about reducing the waiting times, if we're going to do something about improving access to health care, obviously we need to work with the people on the front lines. We need to make sure that we provide the best environment. We need to work in collaboration with them. Whether it's nurses, whether it's doctors, whether it's paramedics, we have an obligation to do that in order to provide the best health care for people in this province.

I guess the question remains, what is this government planning to do about wait times? They had an opportunity to address it in the bill, and they chose not to. I have already said that the Speak Out for Kids network is very concerned that this bill does not set wait times to ensure timely access to care. I want to tell you that we heard about it from all the many groups that came before the committee.

So even though the government made a campaign promise regarding shorter wait times when they said, "We will work with experts to set and meet maximum needs-based waiting times for care," and even though the Romanow report repeatedly emphasizes the need to implement better ways of managing wait times to improve access and ensure quality, we did not see any mention of how the government plans to reduce the wait times and improve access to services and programs in this bill.

I can tell you that this is of tremendous concern to people in the province of Ontario. It comes at a time when we know that waiting times are growing. They're



not just growing in the province of Ontario, they are growing throughout Canada. In fact, the Fraser Institute did a survey. They did their 13th annual waiting list survey and they found that the waiting times for surgical and other therapeutic treatments grew in 2003. Total waiting time between referral from a general practitioner and treatment, averaged across all 12 specialties in 10 provinces surveyed, rose from 16.5 weeks in 2001-02 to 17.7 weeks in 2003. This nationwide deterioration reflects waiting time increases in seven provinces in Canada, and you know, one of them is Ontario. I'm sad to say that the number of procedures waited for also rose in Ontario. That's why it is so important for this government to live up to their campaign promise and address the issue of wait times.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care indicated in the last session of the House, in response to a question on this bill on the day of introduction, that "Wait times are going to be dealt with by the Ontario Health Quality Council and dealt with by the actions of this government." However, the minister and this government didn't give the council the power to do so. How regrettable. Why would we not rely on the expertise of this council? Why would we not give them some real responsibility to deal with the issues that are of concern to people in the province of Ontario? The parliamentary assistant did acknowledge during clause-by-clause that the Ontario Health Quality Council could really only assist in monitoring wait times. So, again, they can't deal with or make recommendations.

1650

Well, if this council is just going to monitor wait times, Ontarians do not need another body that does that. We already have numerous bodies in Ontario, numerous bodies across Canada, that monitor wait times. The reality is, everybody knows they're too long. What we need now is a plan. We need a strategy to develop in order that we can improve access to service, in order that we can reduce wait times.

I'm sure that every member in this House receives letters, e-mails and faxes on a regular basis from Ontarians who tell us that they're waiting too long for diagnostic services and treatments. So why doesn't this government get on with the job of reducing the wait times in this province?

There was a survey conducted recently by the Canadian Medical Association and they indicated that waiting too long for treatment can make patients sicker and more anxious. The study by Ipsos-Reid found that two thirds of Canadians felt that they had waited too long for treatment in the previous 12 months. Half of those people felt that their condition or that of a family member had become worse because of this delay. Here we have an issue of concern to people throughout this province. The government had a chance in Bill 8 to address the issue of reducing the wait times and improving access, and unfortunately they didn't do so.

I want to turn now to part III, the accountability of health care providers. I think that probably this is the

most contentious issue within the bill and it's an issue that certainly needs to have further consultation. And when I say consultation, I don't just mean for the government to listen, I mean that the government has to not only listen, but they have to address the concerns of the delegations, whether they came and made a verbal presentation or whether there was a written presentation.

Let's just take a look at the impact of these accountability agreements. And maybe we want to take a look at what it's going to mean in particular for hospitals, because probably they are the one group of health care providers that are going to be the most severely impacted by the accountability agreements.

Again, I want to stress there wasn't one presenter who came before the committee who doesn't support accountability. Everyone recognized there has to be accountability within the health care system. What the presenters objected to was the manner in which Bill 8 approaches the objective of accountability and the fact that it deals only with the health care providers. There is no onus in this bill on the minister, the ministry or the government to be accountable. Why not? Let's take a look at the concerns.

There is a concern that the whole accountability section, the whole issue of accountability agreements, undermines local, voluntary, community governance of hospitals and shifts more control over hospitals to the health ministry. It will infringe on the rights of Ontarians to play a pivotal role in determining the health services they will receive in their communities. It also circumvents a board's responsibility to govern the affairs of its organization. As a result, it could well make it difficult for hospitals to recruit highly experienced, talented members to their boards. This bill could also sever the community connection with its hospital, and as a result, deprive the hospital of valuable community leadership.

If this is the consequence of Bill 8, if there is a hidden agenda behind this bill, public hospitals will become mere government agencies accountable to the minister rather than to their own communities through their boards. Is this the intent of Bill 8? Why has the government not listened to the voices of concern? Again, is this a step to the eventual elimination of hospital boards as we know them today? Is this a step in the elimination of local input into determining what health services need to be provided in that community?

Part III of the bill, which deals with accountability, overturns the existing principles upon which accountability in Ontario public hospitals is now ensured. Accountability is the cornerstone of this legislation, and yet the bill, as I have said from the outset, focuses exclusively on how to make the health providers accountable to the government, and it is totally silent as to the government's obligations with respect to its support for the provision of health care, or that it has achieved the best use of public resources.

The bill must make explicit the mutual accountability of the government and providers, and it needs to ensure the accountability of the government to the public for the

best use of public resources. The rules of the game must be clear to all the parties involved in an agreement. If hospitals are to be held accountable for delivering a certain level and quality of care, as they've all said they are quite prepared and want to do, then to what extent will the government assume responsibility for funding that level and that quality of care?

I can tell you, this bill makes no reference to funding that level and quality of care. The Canada Health Act does. That's what is missing from this bill. If we are to meet the health care needs of Ontarians through comprehensive, accessible and high-quality health care service, it is absolutely critical that there be mutual accountability of governments and hospitals. If hospitals are required to be accountable for services and programs, then they must know in a timely manner what level of government funding will be available to them.

Again, the problem with this bill is that the accountability agreements only go one way. They only apply to the hospitals or other health resource providers. In fact, they continue to force the hospitals to enter into performance agreements with the province if they can't negotiate an agreement in 60 days. There continues to be power for the minister to override local boards and, again, hospital funding is going to be subject to the signing of a performance agreement, but it still forces hospitals to sign performance agreements.

There is a collaborative approach underway, and this bill in some respects undermines that process. I don't know why the government, if they really are interested in meaningful discussion and collaboration, didn't continue the collaborative approach that was underway. That collaborative approach was the one that had been underway between the hospitals and the government through the JPPC. They were developing a multi-year funding framework for hospitals, and I don't know why they didn't continue to work through that vehicle. That's how we've always moved forward.

1700

This bill, despite what we hear, still contains provisions that can potentially place the employment of hospital CEOs under the control of the minister. We keep hearing the government say that they are an open government, that they believe in transparency and they believe in accountability. In fact, in the speech from the throne on November 20 they said:

"Your new government has made a commitment to bring an open, honest and transparent approach to government.

"It is keeping that commitment....

"It will open up government and its agencies, bring the voices of Ontarians to Queen's Park, and make the entire public sector more transparent and responsible to Ontarians, because transparency and accountability are the best safeguards of public services."

If this government believes what they have said there, why does this bill not contain mutual accountability? Even the minister told us that accountability is a two-way street, and that it is a shared responsibility. If that's the

case, this bill needs to extend not just to the health care providers but also to the government. Why is Bill 8 so unnecessarily one-sided? Why does it focus exclusively on how to make health care providers accountable to the government and yet is totally silent as to the government's obligations with respect to ensuring the provision of health care? Mr Speaker, we haven't heard the answer to those questions. Those who appeared before the committee are still searching for answers.

I go back to what I said before about the Health Quality Council. There was an opportunity there for enhanced accountability of the government by giving the council broader powers to hold the government accountable. However, the government has chosen not to do so.

On this issue of accountability, let's take a look as well at what happens with the powers that are being given to the minister by this bill. I have said that the bill doesn't hold the minister accountable for his actions, but it does bestow upon him overarching power. In fact, if you take a look at this bill, it's very much about taking control away from the health resource provider and shifting it to the government. To make that point, I want to share some of the comments we heard during the presentations.

I want to quote first from the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, who said, "Let me be clear: Our concern is not over the principle of accountability per se, but rather with the draconian and one-sided approach the bill has taken."

The Ontario Medical Association said, "Bill 8 plainly states that the minister would become all-powerful in dictating anything he wished about terms of service, payment, working conditions or anything else."

The Ontario Hospital Association stated, "The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives Queen's Park the power to impose absolutely anything it likes on an individual hospital."

No matter what the government says, if we take a look at all the evidence that was presented during the public hearings, Bill 8 continues to shift power to the minister, the ministry and the government; it continues to extend far-reaching powers never given to a Minister of Health before. I guess it is for that reason that there are some who continue to wonder if the government does have an ulterior motive or a hidden agenda.

I want to now focus specifically on the issue of hospital governance, and again I want to quote a statement from the Ottawa Hospital. "If the bill becomes law as it is now drafted, public hospitals will, in effect, be converted from publicly funded, not-for-profit, charitable hospital corporations governed by voluntary boards to government agencies." I mentioned that before. The Liberal election platform promised better care in hospitals and communities, but I ask you, how can you provide better local community care if, as this bill can do, it could eliminate the voluntary hospital board in its role in the issue of governance as we know it today?

The presenters who came to us indicated that it is the boards in this province which are in the best position to



identify the services and programs needed for their communities. If this bill moves forward without further amendments, some of that community input is going to be totally lost. I know that when I was Minister of Health, many of the programs that came to my attention came to my attention because of volunteer boards of health which wanted to introduce more health care services in their community. I think of the Thunder Bay hospital. There was a need for expanded services. The hospital board came to see me. We eventually said yes to a new hospital in Thunder Bay. We had people come to us who wanted cardiac care, MRIs—there was a need in that community. We need to make sure the community voices continue to be heard.

At the present time, I can tell you that if this bill moves forward as it is, and if it continues to give those far-reaching powers to the minister to issue a broad range of compliance directives and orders against the board, it's going to continue to make it more difficult for hospitals to recruit and retain voluntary governance boards, if all they are going to be is simply advisory or government agencies.

I think the point was well made during the Ontario Hospital Association's presentation to the committee, and I quote, "As MPPs in this province, you are aware that the hospitals in your home communities and across your large ridings are governed by dedicated voluntary boards. The members of these boards are community leaders, business people and others with a civic orientation to community service. Many of you will know them as your neighbours and friends. These people are entrusted with the oversight, fiscal stewardship, mission and strategic direction of their hospital with a single purpose in mind, and that is to create healthier communities."

This bill will continue to allow the minister to unilaterally impose accountability agreements on these boards, it will give the minister the opportunity to issue a broad range of compliance directives and orders against the board, and it can still affect the employment of a CEO through an order. So you see, it is going to change the governance structure in our hospitals as we know it today.

That's interesting, because I want to share with you a comment that I heard last week and draw a parallel between what I heard and what Bill 8 can do. John Manley, during a press conference on OPG, was asked by a member of the media a question about political interference in respect to governance. Mr Manley's response was, and I have to paraphrase, that the board should choose the CEO, that this is an important element of accountability and the board should hold the CEO accountable. Think about it, members of the government: John Manley obviously would not agree with the intention of Bill 8.

In the same way that John Manley thinks the board should not only choose the CEO but hold him accountable, I think the same can be said of hospitals. It is their responsibility to hold the CEO accountable; it is not the responsibility of the Minister of Health. That expression

of concern about the power given to the minister was heard from about 33 hospitals that made submissions orally and 29 that presented written submissions. The question I ask today is, how many more hospitals is it going to take for this government to engage in a meaningful consultation and address some of the concerns that are out there? I just want to tell you that these are concerns that are sincere; they are legitimate. I think this government needs to continue to have consultations with the hospital sector in order to give some reassurance that the accountability is going to go both ways, that there is going to be mutual accountability, and that certainly the minister isn't going to be all-powerful at the end of the day.

What are some of the potential implications of the passage of Bill 8 without further amendments? One could be reduced accessibility to health care providers.

I want to quote from the OMA. "A recent landmark survey" that they released of 2,000 doctors in the province "has found that almost one of every six doctors in the province is seriously considering moving their practice outside Ontario. The survey conducted by The Strategic Counsel in December 2003 suggests that an inability to treat their patients in a timely manner, the chronic shortage of physicians and a declining quality of life are contributing factors as to why physicians are considering moving to other jurisdictions...."

"When asked about the state of the health care system in Ontario, the survey clearly shows that doctors are most concerned about the negative impact [of] physician shortages," with 97% concerned; "general underfunding of the health care system," at 95%; and "delays in treatment caused by waiting lists," at 90%, and the effect they are having on patient care. "In a similar survey completed in 2000," and that's why I think this is important, "only 75% of doctors felt that increasing the number of physicians in Ontario should be a priority." Today we have 97% who feel that we must increase the number of physicians.

**1710**

Regrettably, Bill 8 will further exacerbate this situation of too few physicians. We heard that from the OMA when they came before the committee. They said that Bill 8, if enacted, will do the opposite. Doctors who are considering leaving the province will leave, doctors who are considering retiring will retire, and the few doctors who are currently considering moving to Ontario won't come. Now, I will acknowledge that there have been some amendments that have been made; however, there are others that still need to be addressed.

We already recognize that we have a tremendous shortage of health human resources in Ontario. I don't know why the government isn't prepared to consider the impact that Bill 8 could have to make that shortage even more severe. According to the estimates we have today, we actually have 900,000 Ontarians without a doctor, and according to the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, we are losing hundreds of nurses every year to other provinces and to the United States.

We need to make sure we do everything we can to attract health care providers. I was so disappointed to learn yesterday that this government had suspended the nurse recruitment program that our government set up. It was a program that would have offered free tuition for nurses to work in underserved areas. Is this government not committed to making sure that people have access to nurses in Ontario? That is probably the one health provider that the patient identifies most closely with. They provide compassionate, outstanding care every day to people in this province, and now we see that the intention of getting nurses into underserved communities by providing them with free tuition has been suspended; it's under review.

Why? I go back to what I said before: This bill doesn't improve access to services, it doesn't improve access to human resources, and it doesn't address the issue of wait times.

What are some of the key amendments that stakeholders are still asking the government to address? I will tell you in all fairness that we did not get a copy of this bill until today. The stakeholders in the province of Ontario don't have copies of the bill, so there's a lot of confusion about what amendments were made and what amendments were not made. But we've already heard from some of those who made representations—today—about the changes they would like to see. I just want to highlight some of those changes.

The OMA is looking at the issue of block fees. Bill 8 allows for the government to regulate block fees instead of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Again, they believe it is the CPSO that should continue to regulate block fees. This is a shift of power from the college to the minister.

Again, Bill 8 would impose liability on individual physicians for the misuse of their billing numbers by a third party. We know that many fees, including hospital technical fees, are billed using physician billing numbers. The OMA believes that members should not be liable for any wrongful billing committed by a third party without the knowledge or consent of the physician. They'd like to see an amendment there. The general manager still has the authority to suspend or withhold payment and, again, they want to see some amendments there. They continue to indicate that if further amendments are not made, it can have a negative impact on accessibility to physicians in Ontario. I hope the government will give serious consideration to some of those outstanding concerns of the OMA.

The other health care provider that we've heard from—as I said, most people don't know what amendments were made to the bill; we only got a copy ourselves today—the Ontario Hospital Association, has serious concerns with the legislation. I know they have tried to work collaboratively with the government. I hope the government will continue to have meaningful consultations with the Ontario Hospital Association and address the concerns, because if the concerns can be

addressed, it's going to mean better health care quality and timely provision of care for the people of Ontario.

We have seen some progress made on the amendments, but the most serious aspects of this bill, according to the Ontario Hospital Association, have not been addressed. They would like to see further changes to safeguard the critical role of community governance of hospitals. They point out that, "The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives the provincial government the power to impose anything it likes on any individual hospital, bypassing hospital boards, the people who know the most about the hospital and the services it provides in the community."

In light of the fact that the serious aspects of this bill have not been addressed by the government, the OHA would strongly recommend to the government—and they have written the minister and asked—"that the bill be returned to the standing committee for public hearings following second reading for further amendments." They want to continue to work with the government to make this bill better in its provision of quality and timely care for the citizens of Ontario.

In this letter to Mr Smitherman, they say, "Although a reference to negotiated accountability agreements has been included,"—this is in the new draft—"the legislation still permits these agreements to be imposed after a period of 60 days without referral to a third party dispute resolution mechanism. Throughout our discussions with you and your officials and in our suggested amendments to the bill, we have made it clear that the due process provisions are insufficient and that the bill must expressly provide for referral to dispute resolution, such as arbitration." In fact, I attempted to introduce amendments that would deal with the due process provisions and that there would be reference to a third party dispute resolution mechanism, however the government refused to accept any form of arbitration.

"Second," they say in the letter to the minister, "the bill gives the minister extensive powers to issue a broad range of compliance directives and orders against the board—again without first referring the matter to third party dispute resolution or at a minimum, obtaining approval from cabinet." Again, I attempted to make those amendments but they were turned down by the government members.

"Third, we cannot endorse provisions which give the government authority to issue orders directly against hospital leaders, thereby undermining the role of the board." They indicate they believe sections 26.1 and 27 should be deleted.

"Fourth, to ensure that communities continue to receive the services they need, the inclusion of 'accessibility' or 'timely access to care in the community' must be included within the definition of 'public interests.'" I would agree. The entire issue of accessibility and timely access to care in the community needs to be included within the definition of public interest. It's not there.

"Fifth, we are very concerned that section 9 has been amended extensively to allow for a broad range of



clinical payments by hospitals and other facilities to physicians, contrary to recommendations made by the OHA that these payments be made permissible only 'in a narrow range of circumstances.'"

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In the hour that has been allocated, I have tried to point out some of the concerns that people in Ontario have with Bill 8. I think they have certainly demonstrated that there's a lot of concern about the shift of power to the minister. I would say, having been a Minister of Health myself, it is unprecedented power, unlike anything we have ever seen before. In fact, my colleague in the NDP pointed out the difference to the minister between the powers here and the supervisory powers.

Also, the issue of eliminating the voluntary governance of our hospitals continues to be an issue of concern. The lack of accessibility to services and health services providers is an area of concern.

But I think the overriding concern is with the whole issue of accountability. The government has stated that this is the cornerstone of Bill 8. They are adding accountability as one of the principles of the health care system. Regrettably, although they are prepared to hold the health care providers in Ontario accountable, it is not mutual accountability. There is no accountability for the government to ensure that they have a plan and a strategy, that they provide the resources in order that the people in this province can have access to timely treatment and care, to the services and the programs they need. And it doesn't address the fact that this is obviously what we all believe at the end of the day needs to happen. We need to make sure that no matter where you live in this province, whether it's in Port Arthur—now Thunder Bay—Ottawa, Pembroke or Windsor, we all need to have equal access and we all need to make sure that we don't have—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

**Ms Martel:** I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for her comments. She, along with myself, sat through most of the committee hearings on the bill so we're aware of what people had to say when they came forward. I can tell you it was interesting for me: For a government that was using this bill as a signature piece—I think that is the best way to describe it—their signature piece took a lot of blows along the way. In hearing after hearing, in presentation after presentation, the people who came forward were critical of the government's bill. They were critical because they strongly believe—and they are right—that the bill will give the minister the ability to use sweeping, draconian powers essentially to take over boards and to grab back the pay of CEOs, which the minister shouldn't do because he is not the employer of those same CEOs.

There were many who came forward and pointed out the contradiction between the preamble, which in very glowing terms talks about medicare and particularly about stopping two-tier medicine, and then the contents of the bill which do nothing to support the preamble.

Contrast that with the direction of the government, which is a direction to continue down the road of private hospitals, private CAT scans, competitive bidding in home care, all of which allows money that should go into patient care to be diverted instead into the profits of those for-profit companies. So there was a huge disconnect between the preamble and what the government claims it wants to do and what's actually happening.

Nothing in the bill, not one single detail, provision, amendment or clause, actually protects medicare or enhances medicare. Many people came to point that out. That is the case. That is the reason we can't support the bill, because the bill does nothing to improve or support medicare.

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** I would like to thank the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and the former Minister of Health for her comments this afternoon.

I would like to make a comment with regard to the idea of going out before drafting the document for consultation. As Liberals, we're very proud of the fact that we were able to draft legislation and we were not afraid to go out in public and to seek help from health care providers and seek advice from the citizens of the province.

I'd also like to say that there were no hidden agendas in anything that we presented in this bill or with our amendments. There were no hidden agendas with regard to our health quality council, nor hidden agendas with prohibition of two-tier medicine, nor hidden agendas with the entrenchment of accountability. We put the facts on paper. We brought it out to the public and we put to Ontarians what we believed.

I certainly know that the Minister of Health, when he addressed the consultation process in mid-February, acknowledged that the bill needed improvements. He said that we acknowledge the need for improvement in some areas of the bill to better achieve the intent of the legislation to strengthen medicare in the province. That is what we listened to as we went around the province. I was proud to be one of those individuals, to be the Vice-Chair and to have had the opportunity to chair the consultations one afternoon, to listen, to learn and to understand what had to be put into the amendments. That's what we have brought forward. That's what we have here in our second reading. That's what we as Liberals are proud to present and what we consider to be progressive.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I want to commend the member for Kitchener-Waterloo on her very well-presented, thoughtful critique of this bill, not only on the contents of the bill but the lack of resemblance between what is contained in the bill and campaign promises that were made by the then Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty.

I know our member from Kitchener-Waterloo spent an enormous amount of time on the committee, meeting with stakeholders who are concerned about this bill. It was remarkable that I didn't find one person or group in favour of the bill. I wasn't there the whole time, but I did

sit for a few days on the committee. Hospitals, doctors, union leaders and consumers were all opposed to this bill, and all on a similar theme that while the preamble sounded great, it turned out the emperor had no clothes. It resembled nothing like the dressing they had put up around this bill.

I'm surprised some of the members are speaking in favour. We shall see, but I am shocked at the degree of central control that the Minister of Health and his caucus colleagues are trying to usurp through this bill, to take away the tradition, the history of volunteer hospital boards; all taken back in the Ministry of Health. And that's just hospitals alone; there are other health care providers.

I'm not convinced that the way to get a hold of health care spending and getting better value for the dollar is to have everything run out of the deputy minister's office on down. Granted, the bureaucracy at health plays an important role, but having been there on the government side and seeing the behemoth that is the Ministry of Health, putting everything into their hands to try to get better accountability I think is misguided. I think that the work of the local volunteers in response to the community is the better way to go. We shall see if they are right. But I'm absolutely shocked at the power grab and the centralization of services that this bill brings forward.

**Ms Smith:** I'm happy to have the opportunity to respond to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and some of the comments she made in her hour-long address to us today. I commend her for her stamina and I commend her for the work she did in the committee as well, as we travelled the province together.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo bemoaned the fact there was a lack of agreement to her amendments that she put forward during the clause-by-clause review of this legislation. Unfortunately, the member merely put forward the amendments prepared by one stakeholder, and we had heard from about 110 stakeholders and groups in our travels across the province. We felt it was important that all of those stakeholders be represented and heard and that their views be taken into consideration in developing our amendments. We were happy to have a chance to review those amendments and to put forward our own.

We did, however, pass one amendment that was put forward by the member from Nickel Belt in addressing her concerns with respect to referencing consumers. I would just correct for the record the member for Kitchener-Waterloo that there was one amendment from the opposition.

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She also suggested that we were in some way eliminating hospital boards through this legislation. In no way does Bill 8 eliminate hospital boards. In fact, Bill 8, as an act to protect medicare, reflects our deep respect and appreciation of the volunteer members of hospital boards and our protection of publicly funded, publicly delivered health care across the province. The accountability agreements that we talk about in the bill

will be between these boards and the ministry, and they will be negotiated. In no way do they impact on the boards' ability govern their facilities.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo also raised some concerns with respect to the work of the JPPC. I just wanted to confirm for her that that work continues. We hope the work the JPPC is doing with the ministry will form the basis of the accountability agreements in the future.

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Kitchener-Waterloo has two minutes to reply.

**Mrs Witmer:** I'd like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Erie-Lincoln and Nipissing for their comments. I would like to correct the record in regard to a comment just made by the member from Nipissing. She said none of my amendments were accepted—those, by the way, were all of the amendments that were put forward by the opposition—because they represented only one stakeholder. Well, I would just like to set the record straight. They actually reflected the input and advice that we have received from the long-term-care community, the social worker community, the nurses, individuals who appeared before this committee representing many different professions, individuals and people who were not actively involved in the health care field, doctors and hospitals. So I think she was a little bit out of line to suggest they all came from one stakeholder.

Again, I would just ask this government to keep in mind that we all want the same thing in this House: We want a health system that is going to be responsive to the needs of the people in this province. We all believe in the principles of the Canada Health Act, and we all believe in the issue of accountability. Regrettably, this bill shifts tremendous, far-reaching power to the minister. It shifts it away from the other health care providers.

This bill also speaks about accountability, but it only imposes accountability on the health care providers. There is no accountability in this bill for the minister, the ministry or this government. This will not ensure the public that their health resources are going to be spent in the best way.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate on Bill 8?

**Ms Martel:** To begin, I too want to welcome Doris Grinspun to the Legislature this afternoon.

I want to set on the record that New Democrats are opposed to Bill 8. We are opposed because the bill gives sweeping draconian powers to the minister to take over the control of local hospital boards, boards at CCACs, boards of community health centres and also administrations at long-term-care facilities, and because it allows the minister as well to essentially take over control of the CEO, who is an employee, not of the Ministry of Health but of local boards.

We oppose this bill because it sets up a health quality council, which in fact will not be able to hold the minister accountable because none of the powers that are given to that council will allow them to be, despite the excellent work I presume they will do.



Thirdly, we oppose this bill because it does absolutely nothing to stop the further privatization of health care services in the province, it does nothing to reverse the privatization of health care services that were begun by the Conservatives and that the Liberals promised to reverse, and it does nothing as well to truly support principles of medicare. So let me deal with those three items.

Let me deal first with the very sweeping draconian powers that the minister has.

The minister would have you believe that the bill really does nothing more, nothing less than what's currently in place, and I have to tell you that every hospital board that came before us had a different vision. So it's quite interesting that the minister wanted to say that this is really nothing more, nothing less, nothing different from what's already in place. Every one of those volunteer boards that came before us said absolutely the contrary.

I want to just read some comments from one of the most compelling presentations that we heard. This was in Ottawa from the Montfort Hospital. These are some comments from Gisèle Lalonde, the chair:

"It is extremely difficult for Franco-Ontarians to fathom how a Liberal government could even propose to pass a law so draconian, so totalitarian, that it brings us back to the sad days of the ill-advised and unconstitutional proposed closure of our hospital by the Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission.

"Bill 8 is nothing less than a blatant and dangerous attack on what Ontario's linguistic minority considers to be a sacred trust: the Franco-Ontarians' ability to make decisions that affect the development and the future of its own institutions, the Montfort Hospital."

Finally, "our volunteer members from the Montfort board of trustees will address more fully questions that concern them more directly in their depositions, but let me tell you that from the community's vantage point, we see this law as nothing more than a hostile takeover by the minister of an institution that Franco-Ontarians built."

Let me just reread a little bit of what Bernard Grandmaître had to say, because he is a former Liberal MPP, a former Liberal cabinet minister from the David Peterson era. He said: "As a Liberal, I have seen better days. This law, Bill 8, is not the product of the Liberal Party that I know. In fact, it is in flagrant contradiction with some of the most basic principles that inspire and have always inspired my party.... This bill is a serious breach of confidence and of democratic principles, and like Mrs Lalonde, it is hard for me to believe that this is being done by a Liberal government."

Or by Michelle de Courville Nicol, who's the past chair of the Montfort Hospital board of trustees: "We change governments; we change the flavour of the month. Now it's accountability. And it is imposed with a law so drastic, so totalitarian, that it rivals in scope the powers that were ceded to the restructuring commission by the previous regime, except this time it's the minister

who seeks to increase his own power over hospitals and over the communities they serve."

She is correct, because as draconian as the hospital service restructuring commission was, it was that commission that had the power. In this case, in this bill, the minister takes the power to deal with hospital boards, to deal with the pay of CEOs on to himself, and that is not acceptable.

I don't think, frankly, that the position of the Montfort Hospital has changed very much. I'll be interested for us to go out to public hearings and hear from them what they have to say, because the fact of the matter is, the provisions in the bill which they found most objectionable remain. They were not changed by the amendments that the government brought in on March 9. Let me give you some examples.

On page 25 of the revised bill, it says the following: "If the health resource provider and the minister do not enter into an accountability agreement within 60 days after the minister gave notice under subsection (1), the minister may direct the health resource provider to enter into an accountability agreement with the minister and with any other health resource provider on terms as the minister may determine, and the health resource provider shall enter into and shall comply with the accountability agreement."

You see, they "shall." The minister has tried to say again and again and again that there will be negotiated accountability agreements, and nothing can be further from the truth, if you look at the provisions in the amended bill.

Let me give you a second example. On page 27—this would be subsection 21.1(4). It reads as follows: "The minister shall consider any representations made under subsection (3) before making a decision to issue a compliance directive or an order under subsection 26(1)." There's nothing about negotiation. There's nothing about compromise. The only thing that this section permits is the minister to consider some representation, either oral or written, by the hospital before the minister makes the order, before the minister imposes the order or the compliance directive. There's no negotiated settlement there at all.

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If you look at subsection 22(2) on page 28 of the revised bill, it says, "The health resource provider shall comply with the compliance directive." There's nothing negotiated about that. The minister comes in, the minister unilaterally issues a compliance order or a compliance directive, and the health resource provider has no choice but to comply. That's completely contrary to the minister's rhetoric about how these accountability agreements will be negotiated.

A further example is subsection 26(2) on page 30 of the revised bill with respect to compliance, "The health resource provider shall comply with an order issued under subsection (1)." Again, the minister has the power under the bill to unilaterally make orders to the hospital board, to the board of the CCAC, to the board of the

CHC, to the administration at the long-term-care facility, and those resource providers have to comply. There is no kind of negotiation here if they disagree. They have to comply. That's the beginning and the end of the matter.

One final area has to do with the CEO, and this is in subsection 26.1(6), page 32 of the revised bill.

"(6) An order issued under subsection (5) may require the chief executive officer and health resource provider to comply with any directions set out in the order relating to any or all of the following:

"1. Holding back, reducing or varying the compensation package provided to or on behalf of a chief executive officer in any manner and for any period of time as provided for in the order and despite any provision in a contract to the contrary.

"2. Requiring a chief executive officer to pay any amount of his or her compensation package to the crown or any person....

"(7) A chief executive officer and a health service provider shall comply with the directions set out in the order."

It's very clear why Montfort Hospital and every other hospital board came before the committee and said that this bill provides draconian powers. It's very clear why that is so, because it is so; that's exactly what the provisions say. And there was nothing in the amendments that came from the government on March 9 to temper that in any way, shape or form.

I said to the government on March 9, "Do yourself a favour. Establish an independent arbitration process. When there are disputes between yourself and the hospital board, when there are disputes between yourself and the board of the CCAC or a CHC or the administration of a long-term-care facility with respect to accountability agreements, allow for an independent third party to make the decision. At least that way, in the community it won't be seen as the minister using his or her power to shut that local board down." I couldn't get the government to agree. I couldn't get the government to agree to have an independent third party deal with any disputes that arise out of accountability agreements. I don't understand why the government doesn't want to agree to this mechanism.

The Minister of Health shouldn't have these kinds of powers. The Health Services Restructuring Commission shouldn't have had those kinds of powers. Speaker, when the former government brought that through, your party and mine voted against that kind of arbitrary power in Bill 26. Now your government brings in the same kind of draconian, sweeping powers, but they are even more draconian and more sweeping because they allow the minister to do the dirty work, to do the job, instead of looking for an impartial third party who can deal with these matters in a legitimate way.

I said to the minister earlier, and I'll repeat it here, that when this bill goes through, if unamended, I'm sure there will be an early court case from a board that will come forward and say, "The minister cannot, because of contract law, become the employer and hence grab

compensation from our CEO." The board is the employer, not the minister. Before too long, if this bill is passed unchanged, there will be a legal challenge by a board, and I'm telling you that board is going to win, because the minister doesn't have the right to act as the employer, doesn't have the right to grab compensation or reduce compensation of an employee of a hospital. But the government is going to find out the hard way, I suspect, through litigation.

Small wonder that the OHA wrote a letter to the members of the committee—I assume to the members of the committee; I got a copy—to Minister Smitherman on March 17, that said as follows: "While progress has been made, the amendments made on March 9 have not yet corrected what hospitals see as the most serious aspects of the bill. We believe further changes need to be made to sufficiently safeguard the critical role of community governance of hospitals. The central problem with Bill 8 is that it gives the provincial government the power to impose anything that it likes on any individual hospital, bypassing local boards—the people who know most about the hospital and the services it provides to the community."

The government should not take these kinds of powers into their own hands through the minister. The government wants accountability agreements, and every group that came forward said they supported that. But if the government truly wants those negotiated, rather than imposed, then the government will set up a dispute resolution mechanism that will allow an independent third party—an arbitrator—to make the final decision, not the minister. Because in every community where you impose a compliance directive, in every community where you impose an order, you will be seen to be usurping the legitimate role of the volunteer board and its employee, the CEO. You don't want to be in that position.

The second reason we oppose the bill is because the bill does nothing to stop the privatization of health care. That is very clear as you read the bill. It does absolutely nothing to stop the creeping privatization of health care. It does nothing to protect or enhance medicare either.

Frankly, during the course of the hearings, I said on many occasions that the bill is nothing more than a public relations exercise. It's no surprise to me that this bill was introduced on the first anniversary of the release of the Romanow report. But what is regrettable is that nothing in the bill supports one of the fundamentals that Romanow reported on, which was that there was no evidence brought to him in his role as commissioner to support the idea that the private sector can deliver health care services more effectively, more efficiently or with better health care outcomes. Romanow made that clear. He gave the private sector every opportunity to come forward and demonstrate clearly how private sector health care services are more effective, more efficient or provide better health outcomes. The private sector could not do that.

You would think, then, that the government would use the opportunity to use the bill, especially on the first



anniversary of the release of the report, to slam the door shut in the face of further privatization of health care services, to slam the door shut on the privatization that was begun under the Conservatives. The government isn't doing anything of the sort.

The bill doesn't end the privatization of those services either. Let me give you some examples. The preamble says that "our system of publicly funded health services ... reflects fundamental Canadian values." They do. I believe most people in this province believe that health care services should be publicly funded. Why is it, then, that this Liberal government continues down the road of the P3 hospitals, which support private funding of hospital construction in the province, quite contrary to what Premier McGuinty promised before the election?

This is what the Premier said with respect to P3 hospitals before the election: "What I take issue with is the mechanism. We believe in public ownership and public financing (of health care). I will take these hospitals and bring them inside the public sector," Dalton McGuinty said to the Ottawa Citizen, Wednesday, May 28, 2003. Also in this same article: "Mr McGuinty believes that public-private sector partnerships in health care would ultimately cost the province more money than traditional arrangements. He says such arrangements would be discontinued and the hospitals returned to full public ownership."

You see, the key—and I raised this again and again during the course of the public hearings—is the public financing of new hospital construction in Brampton, Ottawa and the others that the ministry wants to do, versus the arrangement that the government has continued with, which is essentially the same arrangement as the previous government. All we've done is replace a Conservative lease with a Liberal mortgage, but the negative effects are still the same.

Number one, you have a complete reversal of what has been the traditional way to finance capital construction of hospitals in the province: through the public sector, through grants. Now we will have a mortgage instead of a lease—a mortgage—at those two hospitals, and the hospitals will have to pay that mortgage through their operating budget, which is the budget that should be used to provide front-line patient care, not pay for bricks and mortar. That's the first negative consequence.

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The second is that it is going to cost more. All the evidence from Great Britain and Australia makes that clear, because that's where P3s have been in place. It's going to cost the taxpayers more for two reasons. Number one, it will cost the private sector consortium in Brampton and Ottawa more money to borrow. The government gets the lowest interest rates, and right now interest rates are very low; it would be in the government's best interest to build now. So it's going to cost the private sector more, and we're going to pay for that through the mortgage. But the private sector isn't going to do this for free; they're not a charity case. They want to make a profit: 15% to 20%. Even at a 15% figure,

we're going to pay millions of dollars more for the private sector to build, through the mortgage arrangement, than we would if the government did it through the public sector.

The fundamental problem is that is money that should be going into patient care. That money, instead, is going to go into the pockets of the private sector consortium. I am opposed to that, because that is millions and millions of dollars that could be better spent, that should be spent, on providing essential health care services to patients in the hospital.

The government said they were going to get rid of P3 hospitals, and there has been no change. In the *Brampton Guardian* this week, it said the following: "Part of the delay is reportedly"—and this has to do with the hospital in Brampton—"attributable to the 'change' in the deal that the Liberals brokered to make the project seem less like a P3. However, when all is said and done, after months of working out those changes and, presumably, rewording of the agreement—surprise—it still looks like a P3, the same thing we had almost six months ago when the Conservatives were defeated and the Liberals took over." It is a P3, and the government is moving in absolutely the wrong direction.

The second area with respect to privatization: The government has done nothing, absolutely nothing, about the private MRI and CAT scan clinics despite what the government said in its election document. Here's what the government had to say in the health care document in the election platform:

"The Harris-Eves government opened private, two-tier MRI and CT clinics. These clinics will sell" a variety of "scans alongside public services, giving quicker access to those who can afford to buy their way to the front of the line."

"We will cancel the Harris-Eves private clinics and replace them with public services. The Romanow commission proved there is no evidence to support expanding private diagnostic services."

"Many communities have already raised money for a new MRI or CT for their local hospital, but have been denied operating funds by the Harris-Eves government. Instead of opening private clinics, we will work with these communities to expand access in the public system."

What happened to the government promise? Here we are six months after the government has been elected, and the private MRI-CT scan clinics are still operating in the system. It's true that there are people using those private MRIs who are getting quicker access and getting to the front of the line because they can afford to pay their way there. So what happened to the government promise to cancel these and put this technology into the public system? Gone, gone, gone. It was good enough to buy votes before the election, but now that the election is over, the government has done nothing about ending those clinics. That's contrary to the glowing words and the preamble that talk about protection of publicly funded services and ending two-tier health.

Look at some other examples with respect to why the preamble is a complete disconnect from the rest of the bill. The preamble as well, if I might, also says that we were going to recognize pharmacare for catastrophic drug costs and implement more home care in Ontario. What's interesting is that in the rest of the bill there is not one mention of pharmacare and in the rest of the bill there is not one mention of home care, not one. If this was a priority for the government, then I ask the government members, where are the provisions in the bill to establish pharmacare in the province of Ontario, if you believe it's at the heart of the Romanow report? Where are the provisions in the bill to end competitive bidding in home care? Because competitive bidding in home care has been completely destructive, has driven down wages and salaries of those who work in the sector and has ensured that clients who want continuity of care can't get it because every year or every second year there's a new contract and the contract changes hands.

In our community, the not-for-profit VON—an 80-year existence in our community—had the contract with the Sudbury-Manitoulin CCAC. They lost it last year. Do you know what the chair of the board said was the reason for that? Because the VON paid benefits. It was too expensive for the CCAC to pay benefits to the VON workers. That is happening in CCACs across this province, and what we are seeing is money that should be going into patient care now going into the pockets of the for-profit providers who got into the home care game because the former government allowed competitive bidding. If you want to shut off the tap of money going to the private sector instead of money going into services, then you end competitive bidding in home care. There is nothing about that in this bill.

The preamble also says that the government is going to "Continue to support the prohibition of two-tier medicine, extra billing and user fees in accordance with the Canada Health Act." What's interesting is that at the same time as the preamble of Bill 8 says the government's going to stomp down on user fees, the Premier and the finance minister have been openly discussing, openly musing, about ending the universality of the drug benefit program.

In January, the Premier said the following: "One of the discussions that we are going to have with the people of Ontario are universal programs, some of the things we are now providing to people regardless of their income." Well, I thought Bill 8 was all about protecting universality of the system, not about going out and having a discussion with Ontarians about how we can destroy what has been a universal program like the Ontario drug benefit program.

The same article says the following: "That would include programs not mandated under the Canada Health Act for which the province now pays. The drug benefit program is one, Mr. McGuinty said. Other such services include treatment at stand-alone physiotherapy clinics, devices such as hearing aids, work performed by community laboratories and substance abuse programs."

What's really interesting is the difference between what Mr McGuinty has to say now after he's elected and what he had to say before the election, specifically about the drug benefit plan. This is what he said about user fees to seniors with respect to changes the Conservatives made when they implemented some changes to the ODB; he said the following on June 28, 2001: "Seniors cannot afford this continuing attack on their health care, and you may know that one half of our seniors today in Ontario average about \$16,000 in terms of their annual income." How times change.

1800

Speaker, I see that you're getting up to stop me, so I will end the debate now and continue when we next deal with this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you very much. Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** The member for Nepean-Carleton has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply in the five minutes thereafter.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** The Premier could also reply, I suppose, couldn't he?

**The Speaker:** That's correct.

**Mr Baird:** I have been tremendously concerned about the ethical standards of this Premier in terms of the direction that he gives to his ministers. There's only one person who can set the ethical standard for his or her government, and that's the guy at the top. Since this began, day after day after day, we've seen the Liberal Party engage in cover-ups. We've seen them refuse to allow appointments to be considered at committee. We are forced to come in here day after day after day and ask the same question over to get a response.

It took us more than three weeks to find out if the Minister of Finance had offered his resignation. Because we were living up to our responsibilities, we finally got an answer to that. At this rate, it could take years, but I want to tell you that the loyal opposition will be here in the House and we will ensure that we accept our fiduciary responsibilities to hold this government to account.

I'll tell you, Elinor Caplan resigned when called upon, when there was an investigation. Elinor Caplan resigned because she had the courage of her conviction to stand up and do the right thing. That hasn't happened in this regard.

I asked the Premier on Monday and on Tuesday: in the Liberal Party integrity sessions, did Mr Sorbara declare any potential problem with his role with respect to Royal



Group Technologies? When I did my cabinet pre-clearing, I had to declare that I got a speeding ticket once. That's the kind of information they wanted to know. They won't mention a single, solitary response on that question. Why? Did the Minister of Finance know about these problems and come forward to the Premier, or did he not? They won't answer the question. Maybe we should call Brian Mulroney to come and give some ethics advice to these Liberals, because they sure as heck need it.

Where was the Minister of Finance in all of this? He should have been bowing his head in shame. What was he doing in this chamber? Uttering profanities at representatives of the people of Ontario. Then he sat in his place and denied doing it. It took the Premier to intervene and say, "I heard you use the four-letter word and you'd better stand up and withdraw it." When he did he was cocky, and that's a disgrace, an absolute disgrace.

We've asked on numerous occasions, did he or did he not absent himself from discussions of the appointment of the vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission? It took three weeks, and we finally found out that he didn't show up in cabinet that day. What we want to know is, did he absent himself and his office from discussions? I say to the Minister of Labour that even Martha Stewart could have beaten the rap if she could have appointed the judge. We know that this woman could very well be the person who would hear the case, because the predecessor of this woman was the one who held the YBM case.

I say to members opposite that I've never been charged with slander; I've never been legally accused of lying. There's one person who was charged with slander and they had to make an out-of-court settlement; they had to make an out-of-court settlement and apologize for the outrageous things they had to say.

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** Say it outside.

**Mr Baird:** I've said it outside, I've said that the Premier's and the minister's conduct is unethical. I've said it 10 times outside and I'll repeat it outside because it is unethical. I've never been successfully sued for slander, unlike one individual we know.

The Premier has used on numerous occasions, "To the best of my knowledge, the minister isn't under investigation." We can't even trust this minister to, within 66 days, come forward and say that he is under investigation, so why should we believe them now?

I want to ask the Liberal members opposite why they bothered to take away the Ontario Securities Commission from the minister; he's done absolutely nothing wrong. But we know in fact that they had to do that, and it was wrong. The very man who's in charge of instilling investor confidence in the province of Ontario, the very man who's responsible for ensuring confidence in our capital market, has a cloud over his head. The Premier should bow his head in shame. He should admit that he's wrong and demand that the minister resign immediately.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Parliamentary assistant, you have five—

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe that the minister can refer to any member in this House as a slime ball, and I ask him to withdraw that right this minute.

**The Speaker:** The member has made the comment. Resolve it.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** I want to make this as simple as possible for the members opposite. The conclusion of the Integrity Commissioner is important, because it is that office that has the responsibility to ensure that all members in this House act in accordance with the Members' Integrity Act. It is in accordance with that act, in section 28, that a confidential opinion can be sought from the Integrity Commissioner. That is what the Minister of Finance did on March 2, 2004.

On March 8, 2004, I'll remind the friends on the other side, the Honourable Coulter Osborne reached a conclusion—he reached many conclusions. He provided a detailed opinion on this matter to the minister. In that opinion, the Integrity Commissioner clearly stated that Minister Sorbara took sufficient steps to ensure that he was not in a conflict. The Integrity Commissioner ruled that Minister Sorbara was not in conflict prior to transferring the OSC file to another minister. Further, the Integrity Commissioner's release concluded that Minister Sorbara acted with integrity and was never in a conflict of interest.

Just to make it even simpler for you, we'll go through that. Was the Minister of Finance in a conflict of interest? No. "I do not think that you were in a position of conflict as a result of not taking the remedial action you took on February 25."

Should the minister step aside to ensure a proper investigation? The answer from the Integrity Commissioner was no.

Did the Integrity Commissioner simply rely on Minister Sorbara's version of the events, or did he conduct his own investigations? You may not be interested in this, but he did conduct investigations and spoke to David Brown, QC; Charles Macfarlane; and Wendy Dey of the OSC.

Should the minister have revealed the fact that there was an investigation when Royal decided not to do so, as the opposition parties have suggested? In fact, the answer of the Integrity Commissioner was again no.

Did the minister violate the Members' Integrity Act? Again, the answer of the Integrity Commissioner was no.

Was the Minister of Finance ever personally under investigation? Again, the answer is no.

Did the Premier and the minister agree that should Minister Sorbara become subject to an investigation he would step aside from his ministerial responsibilities pending the outcome? The answer to that question, which has been provided many times, is yes.

With respect to the specific questions you raised again today, with respect to offering a resignation, the answers are all very clear. Did the Minister of Finance offer his resignation? No. Did he tender his resignation? No. Was he asked to tender his resignation or offer his resignation? No. Why wasn't he asked to do so? Because at all times he acted with integrity, was never under investigation and was never in a conflict of interest. That is the reason why the answers to those questions are so very simple.

I know you would prefer to come here at night and grandstand, because you don't want to talk about the real issues that face this province that your government left behind and that each and every day we are trying to clean up. I challenge you to come back and say the questions haven't been answered, because I don't think I could make it any more clear than that.

**The Speaker:** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1808.*



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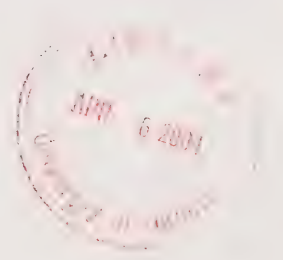
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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)****Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)****Wednesday 24 March 2004****Mercredi 24 mars 2004**Speaker  
Honourable Alvin CurlingClerk  
Claude L. DesRosiersPrésident  
L'honorable Alvin CurlingGreffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers



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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 March 2004

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 mars 2004

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### DEATH OF MEMBER FOR HAMILTON EAST

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** It is with a profound regret and a deep sadness that I report to this House that a short while ago our friend and colleague the MPP for Hamilton East, Dominic Agostino, passed away. I am informed that he passed away suddenly from cancer. There will be a time soon in this House when we can appropriately pay tribute to our friend, after all members have had a bit of time to cope with this news.

I can report that I spoke with his sister, Mary, and conveyed to her, on all our behalf, our sadness, and extended to her, and through her to their extended family, our sympathies at the passing of their brother, son and uncle.

Let me just say this, Speaker. Dominic so loved this place. He loved politics, and he loved the game. He loved the to-and-fro, the back and forth. He was a relentless champion for his principles and his constituents. He always did what he sincerely felt was the right thing to do.

But the greatest loss today is felt by his family. Our thoughts and our love are with Dominic's mother, Theresa, his brother Ralph and his wife Rose, Dominic's sister, Mary, and her husband, Tony, and Dominic's beloved nieces and nephews. I know today they are also thinking of Dominic's late father, Salvatore.

I understand that some other members of the Legislature would like to say a few words. I would ask as well that when that has come to a conclusion, we have a moment of silence in honour of our friend and colleague Dominic Agostino.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** It's certainly with great sadness that I rise to join the Premier on the passing of our colleague and friend. He was someone who was tremendously proud of his background, tremendously proud of his hometown of Hamilton and the east end of Hamilton, who had elected him for some 22 years, far longer than I even realized when I first became friends with Dominic. They returned him in every election for a reason. He never forgot who sent him, whether it was on the school board or at city council or in this place.

He cared passionately. He was a small-l liberal's Liberal. He cared passionately about the disadvantaged. I can tell you that in our first year in government he was Mike Harris's worst nightmare. He never, regardless of

the political consequences, backed down from fighting for what he believed in, whether it was popular or not.

He will be tremendously missed. On behalf of all our colleagues in the official opposition, we look forward to a more appropriate time to pay tribute to him. But at this time, our deepest sympathies and thoughts are with his family—the Premier mentioned his nieces and nephews he so proudly put on his Christmas card, with a big smile—and his many friends, who will miss him greatly.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** On behalf of New Democrats, I too want to especially offer condolences to his family.

I know that members of the Liberal caucus are probably having a very difficult time today. We want you to know that because of where Dominic sat for eight years, right over here, we knew him quite well too. In fact, we looked forward to his wisecracks, and there were always many. We looked forward to his interventions. Because of our particular nature, we really did appreciate his scrappiness, the fact that here was somebody who, on any issue, was going to make his views known. We appreciate the probably very difficult time that many members of the Liberal caucus are having, so our condolences to you too.

I understand there have been some discussions about what should follow from here. I think all of us should take some time over the next day or so to remember our friend and our colleague and pay the proper respects to his family, his community and to us, his friends.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Before we take the moment of silence, allow me to express my feeling for a human being I have admired a lot. I hope that we all remember his energy, his intelligence, and know that our colleague Agostino lives with us forever.

May we stand for a moment of silence.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### MOTIONS

#### ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I move that out of respect to the memory of the late member for Hamilton East, Dominic Agostino, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock next Monday.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Agreed.

*The House adjourned at 1343.*



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**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
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Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
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**Monday 29 March 2004**

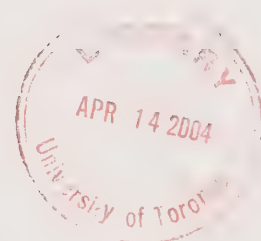
**Lundi 29 mars 2004**

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Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 March 2004

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 mars 2004

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### CANADIANS FOR A GENOCIDE MUSEUM

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I rise in the House today to confirm my support of Canadians for a Genocide Museum, a worthy organization that held a reception last week here at Queen's Park. CGM was established to promote inclusive and equitable education on genocide. As their name suggests, CGM is also interested in establishing a federally funded Canadian genocide museum.

This organization came to Queen's Park to raise awareness of genocide. In spite of the fact that genocide has occurred all too commonly throughout human history, it is not included in our school curriculum. Attending the CGM reception was an eye-opening experience. Prior to this reception, I personally was not aware that so many different groups had been affected by genocide. In fact, CGM itself includes membership from 43 non-profit associations, representing 27 ethnocultural Canadian communities.

Representing the PC caucus, I was pleased to speak at this reception and inform the audience of over 100 people that I'll work to ensure that Bill 4 is reintroduced in the Legislature. Sponsored by former PC MPP Bob Wood, Bill 4 would have recognized the week beginning on the fourth Monday in March of each year as Genocide Memorial Week.

I reiterate my personal commitment to making sure that the fine work of Bob Wood is continued so that genocide and its everlasting impacts are never forgotten. History has too often repeated itself with unforgivable acts against various ethnic, racial and religious groups in our society. These acts must be remembered in order for them never to happen again.

#### HATE CRIMES

**Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge):** I rise today to speak with some regret about recent hate crimes against the Muslim community in the city of Pickering. Early last Thursday morning, vandals spray-painted graffiti and tried to burn down the Al-Mahdi Islamic Centre. If that was not enough, on Friday, the

very next day, someone left a message on their answering machine, calling the Muslim community "criminal."

The Al-Mahdi centre has been part of the community for more than 10 years, and I am proud to say that the broader community is standing by them at this terrible time. Yesterday, I participated in a gathering at the centre attended by an overflow crowd, with community, government and faith leaders bringing messages of support and hope.

In the aftermath of last week's hate crimes against the Jewish community, it is clear that any cowardly attack against one community is an attack on us all. The actions of a few, inspired by ignorance and hate, have no place in Ontario and no place in Canada. I want to assure the Muslim community that we stand by them at this time.

#### FABRY DISEASE

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** On April 25, about 20 Ontarians suffering from Fabry disease, a rare and life-threatening genetic disorder, will no longer have access to the enzyme replacement therapy Frabrazyme. On that date, their compassionate supply ends. Fabrazyme, recently approved by Health Canada, has significantly improved the health, and quality and length of life, of these individuals. Despite the fact that many people have written to the Minister of Health, Mr Smitherman, for funding to continue Fabrazyme, there has been absolutely no response.

Today, I have written to the minister on behalf of these Ontarians, to request that he follow the lead of Alberta and commit that treatment will not be interrupted and that Ontarians receiving the products through compassionate supply will continue to receive coverage. Without this treatment, the lives of Fabry patients are at risk. As the disease progresses, patients develop strokes, heart attacks and kidney failure, and will face premature death.

On behalf of all Ontarians who suffer from Fabry disease, I urge the Minister of Health to end the anxiety and make the commitment today to ensure the continuation of ERT on compassionate grounds until such time that a final decision on approval is made. Please listen to the plea of one patient who writes, "Please help save my life." Minister, will you take immediate action?

#### CECILIA ZHANG

**Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham):** It is with a heavy heart that I rise today. This weekend, more than five long



months after she disappeared, Cecilia Zhang's lifeless body was discovered in a Mississauga ravine. Tomorrow would have been the little girl's 10th birthday.

Cecilia, a bright, beautiful, smiling girl, was much beloved by her friends, neighbours and all who knew her. When she was abducted from her North York home in October, her neighbours and her city pulled together, distributing yellow ribbons and missing child posters. Toronto police worked around the clock to find the little girl and bring her kidnappers to justice. Generous Torontonians posted reward money to bring Cecilia home. Her family never gave up hope for her safe return.

Tragically, Cecilia won't be coming home. Our city has had to face too many tragedies in the last few years. Too many of our children have been taken from us.

Earlier today, I met with Cecilia's parents and conveyed condolences on behalf of this Legislature. The family is struggling with the terrible, terrible grief of losing a child, grief that most of us, thankfully, will never have to understand.

I know that I speak on behalf of David Caplan, the MPP for her community, and all members of the House when I say that our thoughts and prayers are with the Zhang family as they begin to cope with their tragic loss.

#### LAND USE PLANNING

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** I'm calling on the McGuinty government to stop construction of a new town on the Niagara Escarpment. Yes, you heard me: a town on the Niagara Escarpment. We're talking about an international treasure, a UNESCO world heritage site. Yet, for the first time since the province began regulating land use on the escarpment in June 1975, the Liberals are about to allow a whole new town to be built. Castle Glenn Development Corp is poised to build 1,600 new residential units, plus 300 commercial accommodation units and three golf courses in the town of The Blue Mountains. Three days before their term ended, Conservative appointees to the Niagara Escarpment Commission signed an agreement to allow the new town, and it appears as though the Liberals are going to let it go ahead.

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This is scandalous and has to be stopped. The Liberals promised to stop sprawl and protect the environment. They already broke their promise on protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. But if this is allowed to go ahead, it will make their commitment to their new greenbelt legislation awfully hollow.

Environmentalists like the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment and Environmental Defence Canada, among others, have been desperately trying to stop it. Unfortunately, the understanding is that while the new town is subject to an upcoming OMB hearing, the commission's agreement likely means the board will approve it. That leaves no choice but for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to use a minister's zoning order to stop this po-

tentially environmentally devastating development dead in its tracks.

#### THUNDER BAY REGIONAL HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

**Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** I rise today to pay tribute and offer my congratulations to the city of Thunder Bay, its residents, the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital, the regional hospital foundation and the many residents, businesses and municipalities of northwestern Ontario.

In the mid-1990s, the Health Services Restructuring Commission tried to impose upon the community of Thunder Bay an ill-suited solution for the rationalization of hospital services for Thunder Bay and the surrounding communities. Only after a long, difficult struggle and the efforts of many individuals and community groups did we win the ability to move forward on a new hospital. Community leaders like Don Caddo and Keith Jobbitt, the regional hospital foundation, a city council that endorsed a plebiscite result to levy \$25 million on to the municipal tax base, strong leadership from hospital administration, the hospital boards, and the efforts of hundreds of other volunteers in our communities helped to move this project forward.

The regional health sciences centre opened its doors to patients on February 22, 2004. This regional hospital will have a catchment area larger than all of southern Ontario, approximately the size of France, responsible for a population of approximately 275,000 people. Our region will have contributed in the area of \$54 million to the construction of this new facility, representing something in the order of \$375 per person.

In an area facing some severe economic challenges and an aging and declining population, this contribution and fundraising effort was nothing short of heroic. We recognize that there are significant ongoing challenges regarding health services within northwestern Ontario and we are committed to working toward sustainable solutions that will serve the needs of all the residents of our region.

#### HIGHWAY TOLLS

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** Recently, while visiting Sudbury, the Premier suggested the need for a toll on Highway 69. This is a statement coming from the same government that said during the election that there would be no tolls on highways that lack alternative routes.

I, like many of my constituents in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, am left asking some questions. For example, what is the alternative route to Sudbury from Parry Sound? Is the expectation that people who don't want to pay the toll will make their way to Sudbury via North Bay? That doesn't sound like an alternative route to me.

What we have here is not only a serious threat to the well-being of the north but also another broken Liberal

promise. The north has been left out of the benefits of Ontario's economic development for too long. The north did not participate in the economic boom of the late 1990s that southern Ontario enjoyed. It faces many challenges to economic growth.

Highway 69 is a vital link between the north and south, and the more accessible this highway is, the stronger this link will be. Our people rely on it, our businesses rely on it, and the future of our economic development relies on it. A toll on Highway 69 closes the north off once again from economic development and will work against all other northern initiatives of the future. Tolling Highway 69 not only represents backing out of an election promise but represents backing out of the north.

### NEW CANADIANS

**Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** I recently attended an event in my riding in which a woman leaned over to me and said, "This must be the most enjoyable part of your job." And she was right. In fact, it was one of the most pleasant and meaningful events I have attended in the last six months.

On Friday, February 27, the Salvation Army opened the doors of its new and lovely facility on Winterberry Drive in Stoney Creek to 62 new Canadians and their families. People from 26 different countries gathered to be sworn in as Canadian citizens. They came to Canada for many different reasons, some leaving behind family and friends to pursue an opportunity, some fleeing situations and hardships that are unimaginable to many of us; each person coming for a different reason.

The judge attending was one Judge Frank Hayden. He spoke for about 20 minutes to the assembly. He talked of Canada's natural beauty and its resources, its abundant infrastructure of support, its opportunities. He talked of the tolerance, the freedoms and the rights that we cherish, and he talked about responsibility—the responsibility to uphold and protect all that we hold dear and that we at times take for granted. Then he greeted each new Canadian. Each time his voice held a note of spontaneous delight and genuine delight. He shook each one's hand warmly, asked where they'd come from and how they were faring here, exactly as we would all wish to be greeted upon arriving home.

### FEDERAL BUDGET

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I want to say that Christina Blizzard was right in her column last week on the March 24, in an article entitled "Grin 'n' Bear It: Shafted by Their Federal Cousins, Ontario Grits Put on a Happy Face." In the last federal budget from Ralph Goodale, not one dime of an increase in permanent health care funding for the province of Ontario, no significant tax cuts, and what do we hear from Premier McGuinty? He grins and bears it.

I was on CityTV last week talking about the budget, and Finance Minister Goodale did come forward, and he

said that the Canadian television fund would be fully replenished. Well, it is a matter of setting priorities. I don't think there's going to be dancing in the streets over the Canadian television fund at West Lincoln Memorial Hospital when they want funds to build the brand new hospital. I don't think they're raising a glass in a toast in the Niagara region, waiting since September or October for a promise to deliver ambulance dispatch to Niagara. I don't think there's going to be dancing in the streets in Fort Erie and Port Colborne; they're desperately trying to recruit new doctors when not one dime of federal dollars for a permanent increase in health care funding was part of that budget.

We heard a lot from Premier McGuinty that by playing nice with his federal cousins in Ottawa, Ontario taxpayers would be rewarded. Instead, as Blizzard said, they've been shafted. What do the Liberals do? They put on a happy face. This leadership vacuum in Ontario has left our health care coffers empty.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I beg to inform the House that on Wednesday, March 24, the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 24, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2004

#### LOI DE 2004 SUR LE GEL DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze the salaries of members of the Assembly until the end of fiscal year 2004-2005 / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en vue de geler les traitements des députés à l'Assemblée jusqu'à la fin de l'exercice 2004-2005.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Mr Speaker, I will be delivering a more formal statement shortly, but suffice it to say that this bill essentially provides that the salary of a member shall remain as it was on October 2, 2003, the date of the last provincial election, until April 1, 2005.



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**SANDY'S LAW  
(LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT), 2004**

**LOI SANDY DE 2004  
(MODIFICATION DE LA LOI  
SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL)**

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act by requiring signage cautioning pregnant women that the consumption of alcohol while pregnant is the cause of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool en exigeant que soient placées des affiches avertissant les femmes enceintes que la consommation d'alcool pendant la grossesse cause le syndrome d'alcoolisme fœtal.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** This bill amends the Liquor Licence Act by requiring all premises from which liquor is sold or served to display signs cautioning women who are pregnant or who might be pregnant that the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy is often the cause of fetal alcohol syndrome, which can result in the child being developmentally handicapped or having a reduced lifespan.

The short title of this bill is Sandy's Law, in honour of our son Sandy, who died on January 29 from the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome.

**ASSOCIATION OF REGISTERED  
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS  
OF ONTARIO ACT, 2004**

Mr Peterson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES**

**MEMBERS' COMPENSATION  
TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS**

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I rise to speak to a very important bill I introduced just a few moments ago. This bill is about leading by example. It's about taking responsible action. Most of all, it's about doing the right thing. This bill, if passed, would have the effect of freezing MPPs' pay from the date of the last election, October 2, 2003, until April 1, 2005.

Let me tell you what this bill is intended to do and what it is not intended to do.

L'objectif de ce projet de loi est de démontrer que nous, en tant que députés de l'Assemblée législative, comprenons très bien la situation dans laquelle nous devons donner l'exemple.

The intention of this bill is to demonstrate that we as members of this Legislature understand the context in which we lead. Members will know that this government inherited a deficit of \$5.6 billion, plus additional risk of \$2.2 billion for things such as hospital and children's aid society deficits.

Many of these risks are now materializing. As I've said in the past, this means we must all temper our requests of the public purse and the hard-working Ontarians who finance that purse.

We did not create this context. Still, it is in this context that we must govern our province and it is in this context that we must govern ourselves.

I know that government members support this bill, following a discussion that I can say would have made Ontarians very proud. We're urging all members of this Legislature to support the passage of this bill. This bill is our way, as legislators, of recognizing the fiscal reality facing Ontario.

There are some things that this bill is not, and I believe it's important to put them on the record.

It is not a signal that we are forevermore removing from the Integrity Commissioner the difficult task of setting MPPs' pay. We appreciate the commissioner's work on this matter, but at this time, in this context, we have a responsibility as legislators.

This bill is not a signal that we intend to legislate wage settlements for our partners. We do not. We respect the collective bargaining process.

It is not in any way intended to undervalue the work of MPPs. Just the opposite is true: We believe it is a privilege and indeed a high honour to serve the people of Ontario in this their House.

Mais avec les privilèges et les honneurs viennent les obligations de donner le ton en donnant l'exemple.

With that privilege and honour, I was saying, comes an obligation to lead and to lead by example. We simply cannot ask so many Ontarians to temper their requests and give ourselves a raise of any size at the same time. In today's fiscal context, saying no to a pay hike for MPPs is simply the right thing to do, and this bill, if passed, will do just that.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Responses? Member from Grenville.

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** Close, but no cigar.

It's always difficult to speak to the issue of MPPs' remuneration or benefits, as we all know it's awkward, to say the least. That's one of the reasons why this assembly moved in the last term to remove those kinds of decisions from this place and from politics, if you will, not unlike the federal government, where they have tied salary

increases, I believe, to increases of the Supreme Court justices or one of the levels of the courts; I am not sure which it is. In any event, we know that it has been taken out of the hands of politicians and politics, and for good reason: because we know how difficult it is to stand in our place and discuss this kind of an issue and make a case for any positive change to the remuneration or benefits for members of this assembly. It is difficult, and I certainly know from personal experience of 23-plus years in this place that there is not a lot of political appetite for that kind of conversation, to say the least.

In any event, the Premier and the Liberal government have made a decision. It's not a surprise to us on this side, given the government's alarmist rhetoric and their unwillingness to make a sincere and concerted effort to balance this year's budget. What was a surprise was the Premier's initial support for the Integrity Commissioner's recommendations and then the two weeks-plus it took him to perform another flip-flop.

Tellingly, this is the first time since the October election that Dalton McGuinty has made a decision on spending restraint, and a very modest attempt indeed. This bill is evidence that the governing Liberals have no will, no plan, to deal with the alleged fiscal challenges, which they hide behind each time they defend breaking yet more Liberal promises.

It has now been almost six months since the Liberals were elected, and in six months we have seen nothing but posturing, endless blame games and a complete lack of leadership from the Premier on any issue. In six months, we have seen 20 broken election promises from the Liberals, and counting. There is endless talk from the government benches of fiscal challenges, yet no action.

Taxpayers might well ask, "What does this legislation achieve?" This is a modest cost saving for the government and taxpayers—less than \$300,000 on a \$72-billion budget. This is essentially political window dressing. This is a relatively easy initiative for the government, given the fact that the vast majority of Liberal members have received significant pay increases to recognize their roles as whips, members of cabinet, committee chairs etc. The real test will come in the weeks ahead, when they have to deal with the organizations and the union bosses who supported them in the election and in getting into government. Then we'll see the real test, in terms of their commitment to fiscal responsibility.

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I think it's only fair, in the minute left to me—there was a column in the weekend Toronto Star written by Helen Henderson. Ms Henderson repeated and reinforced misperceptions with respect to the remuneration, salaries and benefits of members of this House. I think what's occurred in this place over the past 10 or 11 years should be put on the record.

Under the Rae government, MPPs took a 5% reduction in salary under the social contract. In the first year of the Harris government, members took another reduction of 5%. We did away with committee per diems, tax-free allowances and with the defined benefit pension plan for

members of the Legislature. I think those should all be put on the record, because they're certainly not well recognized by the public.

If anyone is to blame for the situation, it's everyone who is party to the deliberations in the House. We're seeing the reaction from the government members now. That's the reality. Members of this Legislature have shown remarkable restraint, given the economic challenges we've all faced. We've done a good job, and we're continuing to do a good job.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Before the second response—member for Kenora-Rainy River, bear with me a minute—there is a lot of heckling coming from the government side. I'd like to hear—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I don't need an echo from the opposition side either. I'd like to hear the member from Kenora-Rainy River's response.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** It's always useful to be able to recite a little history when events like this happen. I've always believed that MPPs cannot contract out of taking responsibility for their own pay. I have always believed that we should never be allowed to say to the Integrity Commissioner or someone else, "You fix the MPPs' pay," while the salaries of the lowest-paid remain frozen, while the income of those who have to rely on social assistance remains frozen, and while nurses and teachers and ambulance attendants are told something like 2% or less. I've always believed that. But I want all those workers out there to know what the Liberals apparently believed.

Here is a quote from Dwight Duncan, who is now House leader and Minister of Energy. On June 19, 2001, he said: "We think it's unseemly that MPPs should be voting for their own pay increases.... We believe the proper way of dealing with this is to have somebody make an independent and binding decision." That's what Dwight Duncan believed then. But when you're Liberal, you can just change your opinion overnight; it doesn't matter.

Then there's David Ramsey, now Minister of Natural Resources. What did he have to say? "I'm glad, finally, we're having this debate, because for years that I've been here, politicians have gone through the angst of how do you set your own salary. It's very unseemly...." That's what he believed then. Obviously he doesn't believe that now.

And then this quote from the now Premier, Dalton McGuinty, in the Canadian Press on August 6, 2003: "If Ernie Eves wants to ask the Integrity Commissioner to review view MPPs' compensation, we will abide by the commissioner's decision." Or this quote: "Our bottom line is that this issue should be decided by an independent third party—not by politicians looking to score political points...." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty, in the Toronto Star on August 6, 2003. Quote: "I will not interfere with this impartial, objective third party." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty, July 29, 2003.



You know what's nice about being a Liberal? What you said yesterday, if you don't like it tomorrow, you just ignore it.

I want to give some more context. Do you know what the Integrity Commissioner had recommended when Mr McGuinty and all the other Liberals said, "We're fine with this"? He recommended a 25% pay increase. These people were prepared to continue to see a freezing of the minimum wage, a freezing of assistance for those who have to rely upon social assistance. They were prepared to tell nurses and teachers and ambulance paramedics "2% or less," as long as they contracted their own salary out to the Integrity Commissioner, and if he ordered 25% or 20%, they were happy. They were very happy.

What we're seeing today is not a statement of principle from the Liberal government. It couldn't be that, because two weeks ago, when the Integrity Commissioner announced 2.7%, they said, "That's fine." No, what happened is this: The light went on. They realized that if they accepted 2.7%, all those hard-working people out there, who in many cases have had to do with 0% in some years or 1% when the inflation rate was running at 2%, were going to come back and say, "OK; 3%—we take you up on that. Three percent this year, 3% last year."

This isn't about a high-minded principle. This is again about a Liberal party and a Liberal government that, if it suits them, will change their promise tomorrow, which leads me to ask the question, did you guys think about anything that you said before the election? We knew there was going to be a deficit. The now Chair of Management Board said there was a risk of at least a \$5-billion deficit. The now Minister Of Community Safety said there was a \$5-billion deficit. The Fraser Institute said there was at least a \$4.5-billion deficit.

You just change your mind whenever you feel like it. That's why this isn't going to work. People see through it.

#### VISITORS

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome the mayor of Hamilton, Mr Larry Di Ianni, who's in the gallery.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I'd also like to welcome you too, and I was about to do that. Thank you very much.

Could I ask members also to welcome L'Atrium School from Amersfoort, Netherlands? The school specializes in English-language and bilingual studies. A group of 13 students from Holland and 10 students from Vaughan Secondary School, I understand, are here with us today. Would you all join me in welcoming them?

Just so that I can more or less coordinate everything, those who would wish to have anyone recognized could pass it to me and, at this time, I will do the recognition. I appreciate that very much.

#### CECILIA ZHANG

**Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am rising to seek unanimous consent as a result of the incredibly sad news of the discovery of little Cecilia Zhang's body over the course of the weekend. Our hearts go out to the family of this wonderful and special child, and I request, respectfully, unanimous consent for a moment of silence to remember this very short and precious life and to offer our thoughts and prayers to the Zhang family.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Do I have unanimous consent for a moment of silence, recognizing that? At this time, we ask members to rise, and people in the gallery to do so too.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

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#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** My question is for my good friend the Premier and it concerns the ethical standards he sets for his administration. Premier, I want to ask you a simple question: Do you feel that removing the Ontario Securities Commission from the jurisdiction of Mr Sorbara is a sufficient response to this scandal?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Yes, I do, I say directly to the member opposite. Again, I'm quite prepared to quote at length from the Integrity Commissioner's letter, but I will spare you that on this particular question. But, absolutely, I think that was the appropriate response, and it happens to be that the Integrity Commissioner agrees with us.

**Mr Baird:** You say it's sufficient, but in a very public manner on February 26, you stripped your Minister of Finance of his responsibilities for the Ontario Securities Commission. We now learn that under the cover of darkness, behind closed doors, you've also stripped your Minister of Finance of his responsibilities with respect to the Toronto Stock Exchange. If your minister has done nothing wrong, as you have maintained throughout this entire scandal, why did you strip him of responsibility for the Toronto Stock Exchange on March 4, a week after this issue became public?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say to the member opposite, I understand that you have a continuing interest in this issue, but I honestly feel that under all the circumstances, we have acted in the most appropriate manner, and it happens to be that the Integrity Commissioner agrees with us.

**Mr Baird:** It was you and your party who promised ethical, open and, most importantly, transparent government. Premier, you've broken all three of those promises to the people of Ontario. We know that on February 26 you stripped your Minister of Finance of his responsi-

bilities for the Ontario Securities Commission. We now learn, more than a week later, that you also stripped him of his responsibilities with respect to the Toronto Stock Exchange. Why did you secretly and behind closed doors, with no notice to the investing public or to the capital markets, strip your Minister of Finance of responsibility for the Toronto Stock Exchange if, as you maintain, he has done absolutely nothing wrong? Would you answer the question, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** It is interesting to note that the member now has a keen and apparently genuine interest in open, ethical and honest government. I would draw to his attention their record with respect to Ontario Hydro. I want to provide the members opposite every assurance that we will not be using OPG or Hydro One as some kind of a personal country club. It is not our intention whatsoever, in any way, shape or form, to hide from the public things that are taking place over at OPG and Hydro One. That's the kind of open, honest and ethical government we're bringing to the people of Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question, the member for Nepean-Carleton.

**Mr Baird:** This is about you, it's about your ethical standards and it's about the way you conduct the business of Ontario.

Premier, it gets worse. Not only a week after this whole scandal became public did you strip the minister of his Ontario Securities Commission responsibilities, but you have also stripped him of his responsibilities with respect to the TSE. But it gets worse. You have not only stripped him of the OSC and the TSE, but you have also stripped him of his responsibilities with respect to the Toronto Futures Exchange, its act and the Commodity Futures Act.

Last week, you said the Integrity Commissioner had ruled that Mr Sorbara had done nothing wrong. You said he was a man of impeccable integrity. You said he had acted responsibly. If that is the case, would you stand in your place, would you address the question and would you tell us why, a week after you stripped him of responsibility for the Ontario Securities Commission, you have stripped him of three more acts and other responsibilities? Would you address the question directly, Premier? Would you stand up and tell us why this order in council of March 4 was done behind closed doors, in secret, under the cover of darkness, and why you didn't report it to the people of Ontario?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Again, this is a matter we've had the opportunity to discuss and indeed to debate at considerable length. This is all part and parcel of the same matter. Nothing has changed. I continue to believe that our Minister of Finance is a person of the utmost integrity who acted appropriately in all the circumstances, and that has been confirmed in writing by the Integrity Commissioner.

**Mr Baird:** The Premier continues to completely ignore the question. We know that on February 26 he carved off part of the Ministry of Finance with respect to

the Ontario Securities Commission. We know that a week later he carved up responsibilities with respect to the Toronto Stock Exchange. He's also done a further OIC on March 4 with additional responsibilities. I say this very directly to the Premier: The Ministry of Finance is not some sort of Christmas tree that you can carve up day after day to hide the ethical standards of your government. If this Premier continues to take action in this respect, the only thing his Minister of Finance will be responsible for is his own cheque book and a calculator.

Would you do the right thing? Would you stand in your place and admit you've made a mistake? It's still not too late to do the right thing. Would you fire the Minister of Finance until these investigations are complete? Would you do that, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Well, it is passing strange to see the member rising to the defence of the Minister of Finance. He says I should not be removing from him certain responsibilities; they're all part and parcel of the same package. Again, we can spend as much time on this as the member opposite would like, but it's my sense from the people of Ontario that they're very much interested in the upcoming budget, their schools, their health care and the quality of the environment. They're very much interested in a number of other issues. This matter has been addressed time and time again, both by myself and the Integrity Commissioner, and my answers remain the same.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, you are correct: Your answers remain the same. You continue to stand in your place and stonewall us from answering simple questions about the ethical standards of your administration. The capital markets are entitled to know, the investing public is entitled to know, and taxpayers and voters in the province of Ontario are entitled to know. Why did you wait until March 4, a full week after stripping him of responsibilities for the OSC, to take responsibilities for the Toronto Stock Exchange away from this minister?

I want to ask you another question directly. Did you at any time make any inquiries as to whether the Ministry of Finance, the minister or his political staff intervened in any way, shape or form with the Toronto Stock Exchange and their whole involvement in this affair? Would you address the question directly, Premier? The people of Ontario are entitled to know.

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I'm not sure if the fishing season has begun, but I certainly hope the member opposite has obtained the requisite licence.

The long and short of it is this: The Minister of Finance has acted appropriately and responsibly in the circumstances. His behaviour has been approved in every respect by the Integrity Commissioner. I understand that the member opposite has a continuing interest in this. I will continue to provide the same answers. At some point in time, it is my sincere hope that the members opposite will begin to address those issues that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians, like their schools, health care and the quality of their environment.



## TRANSIT SERVICES

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Tomorrow is the 50th anniversary of the Toronto subway system, the TTC. Before the election last year, you and your good friend Paul Martin both said you would give two cents a litre of the provincial gas tax and two cents a litre of the federal gas tax for public transit and municipal transportation. So far, neither of you have delivered.

We understand you're going to make an announcement on transit tomorrow, and my question is this, Premier: Are you going to deliver the two cents a litre of the provincial gas tax or is that going to be another broken promise?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Let me say that we are keenly interested in developing a good, positive working relationship with our municipalities. We've already made some significant inroads in laying down the groundwork to build on a positive relationship. We look forward to delivering on that particular commitment that the member opposite has raised. The member will know that we specifically said we intend to phase in the two cents of the gas tax over the course of our mandate. We look forward to doing that and look very much forward to making an announcement tomorrow.

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**Mr Hampton:** So we know there won't be two cents a litre tomorrow. But since this government has a record now of breaking promises, I want to be sure there is going to be any new money at all, because in 2001 someone named Mike Harris committed \$100 million a year in new money to the TTC for 10 years. I want to be very specific, Premier. The money that you're going to announce tomorrow: Is it going to be new money in addition to the \$100 million a year, or are you once again trying to take a discredited Conservative program and repackage it and try to pretend it's something new? Will there be any new money and how much, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I can understand the leader of the NDP's eager anticipation for this good news we'll be putting out tomorrow. Let me just say this: We are working in a way that has not been witnessed in this province for 10 or 11 years now. We are working with the federal government and our municipal partners to ensure that they find themselves, at the end of day, on a sustainable footing so they can support their own particular responsibilities. We intend to ensure, tomorrow and beyond that, that the city of Toronto in particular has its needs met when it comes to ensuring that it can provide its own citizens with good-quality public transportation.

## AUTISM SERVICES

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a question to the Premier. Premier, before the election you promised to extend IBI treatment to autistic children over the age of six. You said specifically, "I also believe that the lack of

government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." Then on Friday your Minister of Children and Youth Services delivered a severe blow to Ontario families by announcing that your government now refuses to extend IBI funding to autistic children over the age of six. Premier, why are you breaking your promise to these families?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know that the minister who worked very hard on this issue is anxious to speak to this.

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question and I'd like to acknowledge her tenacity and her recognition of this issue. I know she cares a great deal.

We have worked very hard in my ministry to bring out the best possible plan based on research, based on best practices, for children and families with autism. It is a four-point plan. We will double the transition coordinators so that children going to school will have more services, as well as increase the services and the training of people in the schools. We will put \$10 million for more therapy for preschool children because the researchers have told us that if they receive the IBI therapy at the preschool level, transition throughout the rest of their lives will be easier. We will also increase capacity at the university and college level, and, starting next year, have 200 more therapists a year. As well, we will evaluate what we do to see if we can generalize this approach for children with other special needs who are also out there suffering.

**Ms Martel:** The question to the Premier was, why is your government breaking a specific promise that you made to extend IBI treatment to autistic children over the age of six? That's the type of discrimination that the Conservatives promised and that is the discrimination you promised to end if elected.

I've got families in the gallery today—Norrah Whitney, Luke Burrows, Gail Geller, Sandy Velaconja, Tammi Starr, Elli Carey. All of their children were receiving government-funded IBI and were cut off at the age of six. All of them saw their children making tremendous gains at age five and age six—gains like starting to communicate, beginning to speak, starting to focus, beginning to express their needs and their wants and their desires, beginning to interact with their peers, starting to respond to instruction and even beginning to read and count—all after the age that your so-called experts said IBI wouldn't work. Tell Luke Burrows, today age eight, why your government is going to continue to discriminate against him and deny him the medically necessary IBI treatment that he needs. Tell him today.

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** I thank the member opposite for the question. What the experts are saying is, if we provide the appropriate supports in the school system for children who receive the proper therapy at the preschool level, the children will continue to prosper and

grow. These “so-called experts,” as you call them, are Gordon Floyd, the executive director of Children’s Mental Health Ontario, who says, “I am in complete support”—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** She’s reading the briefing notes from the Tories, Speaker. Tell her to draft new ones.

**The Speaker:** If you could draft yourself by not responding, maybe you would be able to hear what she’s saying. Could I ask the members of the third party to allow the minister to respond? Thank you.

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** The executive director of Children’s Mental Health Ontario has endorsed this program and says: “I am in support of this program. The minister clearly understands the challenges facing children, youth and their families living with autism.” Peter Szatmari, world-renowned autism expert and acting director of the Offord Centre for Child Studies: “It is a significant and positive step in the right direction.”

I do acknowledge, member opposite, that one of the challenges is at the preschool level. Many of the children did not receive the IBI therapy. That is why we are increasing capacity, so those children at the preschool level can receive the therapy so they can have proper transition to the school system.

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** Why did you lie to these parents?

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Ms Martel:** Shame on all of you. Shame on all of you for denying—

**The Speaker:** I ask the member to restrain herself and to withdraw the comment she made.

**Ms Martel:** No, Speaker, I will not withdraw.

**The Speaker:** New question.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax):** My question is for the Premier. Usually in this province, the Minister of Finance has responsibility for market integrity and investor protection through the Toronto Stock Exchange. This was true until the Premier and others signed this order in council on March 4, stripping the Minister of Finance of his responsibility for the Toronto Stock Exchange.

The difficulty here is that the shares in Royal continued to trade during a period of more than 60 days from the time the Minister of Finance was informed of the investigation, on December 22. In fact, on December 19, more than 2.6 million shares traded hands, according to the Globe and Mail Report on Business, seven times the average.

The Minister of Finance—his ministry—was informed on December 22. On that day, the Ontario Securities Commission informed Royal—I’m sorry, the OSC informed them—that they should issue a public notice. They didn’t do that. They appealed to the TSE, which permitted them not to disclose. The shares continued to

trade for more than two months. During that time, the Minister of Finance knew about the investigation, but investors in the province of Ontario—who are outside investors, not insiders—did not know about it. And what happened to the stock price? It rose during that period of time, during that secret period of time, to over \$17 by the end of the day on February 24.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Flaherty:** Then disclosure happened that night, on February 24, and the investors lost 20% overnight. These are the outside investors. Do you agree now, Premier—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. I’m going to ask that members stop when I ask them to, or I will not allow the answer. You continue to make speeches.

I don’t know whom you asked the question to, because you went on with this.

**Mr Flaherty:** The Premier.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I refer the matter to the Chair of the Management Board.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** The reason I’m responding, of course, and I think it’s very important that the public understand this, is that the Premier assigned responsibility to me for all the legislation affecting securities regulation in Ontario. Naturally, the Toronto Stock Exchange would fall under that.

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I will simply repeat what the Integrity Commissioner said, having examined this matter thoroughly. He said that the Minister of Finance acted perfectly properly. It would have been totally inappropriate for the Minister of Finance to make a disclosure that he was aware of an investigation until either the securities commission or the company itself made that public. So the Integrity Commissioner has said the Minister of Finance acted entirely properly. In fact, he followed exactly the right procedure. Secondly, the Premier has assigned to me, as I think the public would expect and frankly I think the opposition would, responsibility for all legislation affecting securities regulation in the province of Ontario, including the Toronto Stock Exchange.

**Mr Flaherty:** The Chair of Management Board clearly has his facts wrong. He doesn’t realize that there was a separate order in council done a week or so later, after the OIC and after the letter to the Integrity Commissioner. This is the hidden OIC. This is the realization, Premier, that you and the Lieutenant Governor in Council had on March 4, after the Globe and Mail in the Report on Business published news about the stock trading transactions and the responsibility for the TSE. After that you went, “Oops, we’d better take away this and take away that.”

I say to you, Premier, if you decided on March 4 that it was inappropriate for the Minister of Finance to be regulating the TSE, it was inappropriate on December 22. It was a failure to protect investors in the province of Ontario for a period of time of more than 60 days.



Premier, are you going to apply the Gagliano standard here, or are you going to raise the standard of parliamentary democracy and ministerial responsibility?

**Hon Mr Phillips:** I say to the public of Ontario, firstly, the Integrity Commissioner examined this matter in considerable detail and said the minister acted properly. I would also say, and I'm somewhat surprised that the official opposition doesn't realize, that the appropriate thing to do is exactly what the Premier did. He assigned to me the responsibility for administering all of the securities regulations and legislation in the province of Ontario. It would have been absurd, frankly, to say, "Minister Phillips, you have responsibility for the securities commission but not for the rest of the securities legislation."

The Premier acted entirely properly and, as I say, the Integrity Commissioner has said the Minister of Finance acted properly. The Premier did exactly the right thing in assigning responsibility for all securities legislation to myself.

### TUITION

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Students in Ottawa are telling me that they are worried about the affordability of their post-secondary education. I particularly heard from students in law and in medicine who have been saddled with tuition fees that have spiralled out of control thanks to the former government's policy on releasing and deregulating these particular programs and, of course, the underfunding generally speaking.

According to Stats Canada, post-secondary tuition fees have increased by over 131%. That's the largest increase in all of Canada. So, Minister, I want to ask you, can you confirm today whether the freeze that the McGuinty government announced in fact is truly coming to pass for college and university students, and would this freeze include deregulated programs like law and medicine?

**Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** I want to thank my colleague the member for Ottawa Centre for that question. I have actually been dying to tell the House that we are unwavering. That commitment was made in November in the throne speech, and I am happy to say that the Premier and my colleagues have been entirely behind adhering to that commitment. I am happy to tell the member and the people of Ottawa Centre, and in fact all of the people of Ontario, who I know are very interested in this particular item, that we are committed to the freeze of tuition fees at the regulated and deregulated level.

**Mr Patten:** Thank you for confirming that. I know that many students throughout the province—not just in Ottawa, where I speak to students from the two universities that I have in my riding. But I'm sure you know that it's not only students, it's also the institutions knowing that if we have a freeze, they will in fact need some compensation so that they will not be hampered and will not be continuing with the underfunding that

they have received from the previous government. So I ask you, will our government be providing our colleges and universities with compensation for this freeze?

**Hon Mrs Chambers:** I'm happy to respond to my colleague from Ottawa Centre. I'm also happy to say that, yes, there is good news on the way. We are committed to guiding principles that speak to accessibility, affordability and high quality education at the post-secondary level. We will not follow the kind of trends that the previous governments followed. We will not undermine post-secondary education. Everyone has told us that quality requires compensation for the freeze. There is good news on the way. I am looking forward to making that announcement in detail very shortly.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier. It relates to his Minister of Finance. I wonder if the Premier fully understands what the role is of the chair of the audit committee of a public company. If he does, we have to wonder why he ever appointed Greg Sorbara as Minister of Finance for this province.

I refer to an October 24 report in the National Post. It speaks very clearly to the fact that Royal Group "admitted that it was in compliance with only about half of the Toronto Stock Exchange's guidelines for corporate governance." That same article makes reference to the fact that your Minister of Finance was chair of the audit committee, who ultimately had responsibility for ensuring compliance with these kinds of regulations.

Can the Premier tell me today, tell the House today, how he can continue to have confidence in Mr Sorbara as the Minister of Finance when he did the kind of job that he's reported to have done at Royal Group, who were offside with more than half of the governance regulations for the Toronto Stock Exchange? Is that the reason that he stripped him of those responsibilities?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Let me just say that I completely reject the innuendo and scurrilous allegations found within the confines of that question. If the member opposite has self-deputized himself as an adjunct member of the RCMP, then perhaps he should inform the House.

But as far as I am concerned, as far as the Integrity Commissioner is concerned—well, why don't I quote again from the letter. He says specifically, "I see no violation of the Members' Integrity Act ... rising out of the judgment call that you made on this issue.... I do not think that you were in a position of conflict."

Again, we believe the matter has been addressed.

**Mr Klees:** From the very beginning, we were not suggesting that Mr Sorbara is offside with the Integrity Act, and that is precisely why the Premier continues to return to that famous letter. We're talking about parliamentary convention. We're talking about standards of ethics for ministers of the crown. That's what we are talking about here.

That same National Post article makes reference to the fact that Royal Group "spiralled out of control" as to

compensation for its executives. "And as audit committee chairman, it's a mess Mr Sorbara is, in part, responsible for." This is the same individual who is in the process of drafting a budget for the province of Ontario. Is he going to do the same for Ontario as he did for Royal Group?

I would ask you, based on the kind of history that your Minister of Finance has as the chair of the audit committee of a corporation that is now under criminal investigation, do you have that same confidence that this man will bring in a credible budget for the province of Ontario?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Yes, I do.

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## PROPERTY TAXATION IMPÔTS FONCIERS

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** Ma question s'adresse au ministre des Finances. Minister, many constituents of mine have been contacting my office regarding the reclassification of their property assessment. More specifically, maple syrup producers were told that new rules would permit MPAC to reclassify small maple syrup producers from agricultural to industrial. This change would likely put family-operated maple syrup producers out of business, thus weakening an important part of a Canadian heritage, our ever-so-popular maple syrup.

On behalf of rural Ontarians—more specifically, the good constituents of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell—can you please tell the House what is being done for maple syrup producers in Ontario who still fear the possible reclassification.

**L'hon. Greg Sorbara (ministre des Finances):** Je suis très content de répondre aux demandes de mon collègue de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

I should say first of all that I want to publicly thank my parliamentary assistant, Mike Colle, who accepted our colleague's invitation to come to the riding and hear very specifically the concerns of those who own and produce that wonderful spring syrup called maple syrup.

On March 10, we made an announcement that took some immediate steps in response to what we felt was the inappropriate classification and assessment of maple syrup bushes. We have suspended any further classification. We've invited those who have already been reclassified to make an appeal of those classifications. We are bringing the parties together to develop new criteria to make sure that in future the classification and the assessment are appropriate.

**Mr Lalonde:** Thank you, Minister, for reassuring maple syrup producers, and a special thanks to your PA, Mike Colle, for taking the time to listen to my constituents. It is clear to me that the McGuinty government is listening by working with Ontarians.

Minister, trailer park owners are also concerned that they are assessed for each individual camper and trailer in their park on a yearly basis even though some of these trailer parks are open only five to six months a year.

Ceci étant dit, serait-il possible que le ministre des Finances étudie la possibilité que les—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. I'm having difficulty hearing for the shouting matches that are going across here and I'd like to hear the member. May he proceed, then, and I ask for co-operation on both sides.

**M. Lalonde:** Merci, monsieur le Président. Je vais répéter ma question.

Ceci étant dit, serait-il possible que le ministre des Finances étudie la possibilité que les évaluations foncières futures reflètent la réalité que certains terrains de camping ne sont pas ouverts à l'année longue?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I would love to be able to blame all the problems I inherited as Minister of Finance on the previous administration, and in this case I can, because they allowed the retroactive assessment and taxation of trailer parks over the past—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I don't think they want to hear this, sir.

Over their cacophony, let's summarize what we did. We have suspended the assessments. We have said that the assessments will apply for the first time in this taxation year, and we are taking steps to make sure that those assessments are fair, that they're done in a timely fashion and that they're done in advance so that the owners of these lands can pass on appropriate costs to the users of the trailers who place their trailers on these lands. I think that's progress.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** My question is to the Premier. Before the election, you crowned yourself as the education Premier. You said that kids couldn't wait for safer schools, more textbooks or help in the classroom, and parents agreed.

People for Education recently announced that unless you keep your promise and put more money into education right away, we will see a bigger crisis under the Liberals than we saw under the Conservatives. The Toronto Parent Network says that students are starting this school year with less. Premier, will you put \$1.5 billion in education now, or will you break your promise to parents and children of this province?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I want to thank the member for his question. It's with a great deal of pride that I can remind him not only of the fabulous work being done by the Minister of Education but of some of the initiatives we have already taken. We have cancelled the private school tax credit—which, by the way, this member and his party voted against. In addition, we've invested \$112 million in literacy and numeracy programs for those children who are most at risk. We restored local democracy in Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton. There is a



lengthy list. I look forward to a supplementary from the member.

**Mr Marchese:** You said you were the education prince. You said you would match Rozanski and do better. Above and beyond, you guys said, "We need \$1.5 billion to match Rozanski." But last week in the finance committee Liberals MPPs voted down \$1 billion for education. Now you will have us believe that \$112 million will solve the problem. Look, \$1.5 billion is what parents are asking for; \$1.5 billion is what schools need. Kids can't wait. When you were in opposition you and your minister used to say that kids couldn't wait for the extra money. Are you now saying they can?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I appreciate the elevation to some kind of royalty. Let me provide the member opposite every possible assurance that over the ensuing four years our children in their public schools will find themselves in a significantly better position, whether we're talking about test scores, class size or the morale of those people who earn their living day in and day out teaching inside our schools. At the end of the day, the people of Ontario will be blessed with a public education system which inspires the confidence not only of parents but the teachers who earn their living there every day.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** My question is to the Premier. What process have you put in place to immediately be informed should your finance minister, his actions or his decisions as a member of the board or chair of the audit committee of the Royal Group come under investigation by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, the RCMP or the Ontario Securities Commission?

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** We want a hydro question.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** Ask about hydro.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I can understand why the members opposite are reluctant to ask about hydro, for example.

I will assure him again that I have taken a good deal of time to look at this matter. I believe that I have acted responsibly, as did the Minister of Finance, and that has been confirmed by the Integrity Commissioner.

**Mr Hudak:** Premier, let's be frank. Other than your morning newspaper clipping service, you've made no effort whatsoever to stay on top of the developing scandal or new revelations concerning your finance minister or the criminal investigations into the Royal Group. Your finance minister himself had a self-imposed, self-determined blackout period on telling you what was up. If it wasn't for the morning newspapers, you never would have known. Your approach to maintaining the integrity of the position of finance minister in your cabinet is to firmly shut your eyes and cover your ears.

It's time to show leadership, to open your eyes. I ask you to put a process in place today and sign a letter to the

Integrity Commissioner, Justice Coulter Osborne, that the moment the finance minister, his actions or decisions as a member of that company come under investigation by any of the three agencies, you would know immediately and the Legislative Assembly would know immediately. We need to maintain the integrity of the position of finance minister in this House. Will you sign the letter, Premier?

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**Hon Mr McGuinty:** The member is critical of the Minister of Finance for failing to disclose that he had been made aware of the OSC investigation. I want to remind the member of the specific treatment of that particular issue by the Integrity Commissioner. He said: "Put bluntly, it would have been manifestly wrong for you to involve yourself or your ministry in any aspect of the OSC's investigation of Royal, or in any OSC investigation. In particular it would have been wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose, or to cause the disclosure of the OSC/Royal investigation." The minister did the right thing in the circumstances. I believe that is what he did, as did the Integrity Commissioner.

#### IMMUNIZATION

**Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North):** I rise to ask a question of the Honopurable George Smitherman, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Immunization is widely considered to be a cost-effective health intervention for improving health, reducing suffering and preventing premature deaths—something I can speak to personally, having vaccinated thousands of children over the past decade and a half.

Several months ago, the Provincial Auditor expressed concern about immunization levels in Ontario, noting that some 15% of children in this province had not received all required immunizations by the age of seven. I know our government is taking a more proactive and preventive approach to health care than previous governments and that we are also being more co-operative. What are we doing to ensure that our children are protected from preventable diseases?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** This government has identified the challenge of making Ontarians the healthiest Canadians. To do that, we need to invest more of our resources in community-based services and in preventive measures like immunization.

It's right to say that the Provincial Auditor has commented on Ontario's immunization and suggested there is more we can do. This party and this government agree. We made immunization a centrepiece of our campaign platform, and I'm pleased to say to the honourable member that as a result of recent funding announcements from the federal government, I feel a good deal of assurance that we're going to be able to move forward quickly to offer our kids the necessary protection that immunization offers.

**Mr Qadri:** A supplementary question to the Minister of Health: What specific illnesses can children across the

province expect to be immunized against in our new immunization program?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** The immunizations we've committed to and intend to offer in addition to those that already exist are two: for forms of meningitis and for chicken pox. To put this in layperson's terms, someone told me that the efficiencies of these vaccines will have an impact for our kids similar to the introduction of mandatory child seats. I think that makes the point rather well. This is an appropriate protection that we should offer to all the children in our society, and therefore we will.

### DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** I have a question for the Premier. During the election campaign, and subsequently in the throne speech as well, you talked about a democratic deficit. You made certain commitments in your election platform that you were going to encourage greater participation on the part of backbenchers in the decisions and business of the Assembly. I have to say that the early signals are not very positive.

Last week at the government agencies committee, a unanimous consent motion was made to call the new vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission before the committee for review. That was turned down by the government members of the committee. You've appointed a government member as chair of that committee.

The member for Toronto-Danforth has a resolution coming before general government this week, calling on the Minister of Finance to appear before that committee and explain his activities and the actions surrounding the Royal Group Technologies issue.

Premier, I'm asking what the position of your government members will be in terms of approaching that issue. Will you allow the committee to review that matter?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know the member is not suggesting that I should somehow interfere in this process.

What I can say with respect to democratic renewal is that we have a minister who has been working very hard to inspire greater confidence in the people of Ontario. We have, in fact, established a Democratic Renewal Secretariat, which is positively revolutionary. We have already introduced legislation that is going to require cabinet ministers to attend at least two thirds of question periods in this House. Beyond that, we have broadened the powers of the Provincial Auditor, who was constrained under the auspices of the previous government. We have done much with respect to democratic renewal, and we look forward to doing so much more.

**Mr Runciman:** Our party attempted during the fall session to try to work with the government House leader with respect to a programming motion to make this place work better. We respected the position taken by the government in terms of trying to improve the matters around this House.

When I posed this question over a week ago, we were all also concerned by the government House leader's reaction, which was quite comparable to the Premier's: not committing to the review, even though the Minister of Finance has said he was willing to appear. It seems like a lot of rhetoric. The chief whip for the government, Mr Levac, has been quoted as being taken to the woodshed for his comments to a local paper criticizing the Ontario gaming commission. He said he forgot he was now a member of the government and he should have checked with his minister first before commenting.

This is not new business; this is business as usual. We're looking for a change, an improvement in terms of the role of backbenchers and the processes around this place. Is the Premier going to be true to his word and meet his commitment with respect to the people of Ontario, enabling members to have a greater role in the business of this place?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Let me take the opportunity to say how proud I am of every single member of our caucus and how I impose on them a heavy responsibility to represent the views of their constituents. At the end of the day, with respect to the Minister of Finance and as to whether or not any particular committee is going to address any particular issue, that is up to the members who sit on that committee.

### WATER QUALITY

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Most recently, Ontario's rural municipal leaders met in Toronto at the fifth annual combined Rural Ontario Municipal Association and Ontario Good Roads Association conference, a conference designed to bring together over 1,200 municipally elected officials and staff to discuss common issues.

At this conference, it struck me that many municipalities, including the municipality of North Dundas, which is in my riding, had concerns about the cost of water testing. In North Dundas, for example, this community now spends \$1.2 million yearly to meet the new provincial requirements, with two thirds of the remedial costs being funded by the federal and provincial governments. This means that the municipality's share exceeds half a million dollars in a community of just 12,000 citizens.

Our government is committed to providing Ontarians with safe, reliable drinking water and upholding the recommendations of the O'Connor report. However, in doing so, many smaller municipalities are struggling with financial and social implications, as outlined in the recommendations the representatives from North Dundas provided to you, Minister, at the ROMA-OGRA conference. Minister, what will our government do in order to aid these smaller municipalities in ensuring they have safe, reliable drinking water?

**Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment):** The member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh has asked a very important question. At the



ROMA conference, I had the opportunity to meet with over 40 municipalities that came to me on a variety of environmental issues. Most definitely, many of them are concerned about their ability as municipalities to provide safe drinking water in some of their community facilities. I was able at that time to restate this government's commitment to safe drinking water in Ontario and that we will be implementing all of the Walkerton inquiry recommendations.

**Mr Brownell:** Minister, I need not remind you how important it is that we heed the concerns of the smaller rural townships of Ontario in terms of financial and social burdens the new water testing legislation may impose.

I am happy to hear that our government is committed to providing all Ontarians with safe, reliable drinking water and that we will work with Ontario municipalities to ensure they may deliver it to their residents. The township of North Dundas thanks the minister for taking these recommendations under consideration and look forward to the ministry's response. Minister, as you take these recommendations under consideration, can you please update the House as to the progress of implementing the recommendations from Justice O'Connor's report?

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**Hon Mrs Dombrowsky:** I want to perhaps finish the first thought, that this government is also committed, as are municipalities. Our goal is to ensure that water out of all of the taps in Ontario is safe. They provided to us some of the areas where they are having a challenge in accomplishing this. My ministry is committed to reviewing the issues they have brought to our attention and hopefully working with them so that we can arrive at a solution that will enable them to do exactly what they want and what this government wants.

Our commitment to implement all of the Walkerton recommendations is firm and steadfast. I am happy to report that at the present time 35 recommendations have been implemented; another 49 are being implemented through legislation such as the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Nutrient Management Act and the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act; and, finally, our source protection initiative that is underway—the implementation committee, the technical experts committee, as well as the white paper that is out there where Ontarians are providing us with their input on how we can best protect water sources in Ontario—will enable us to meet another 37 recommendations from the Walkerton report.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** My question is to the Premier and it's about the promise of democracy that you made to the people of the city of Kawartha Lakes. You will see in the gallery today that many of them are here to hear your answer.

Before the election, you told them that you support local democracy. You promised them that if they voted in a referendum to de-amalgamate, you would honour that

referendum. You said, "We believe that the best solutions are local solutions and that local residents should have the right to decide on the future of their municipality." Well, Mr Premier, on November 10, the people voted on that future. They voted against their amalgamated city and in favour of returning to their pre-existing local government. But you, sir, have changed your mind. You have said no to de-amalgamation, but more importantly and more tragically, you have said no to democracy. Tell the people of Victoria county here today and those watching on television, why have you broken your promise to them?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs has much to say on this.

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors):** I thank the member for his question and I also welcome the people of Kawartha Lakes who are here today. As I indicated to the council, both when I met with them here in Toronto and later, when I went to Kawartha Lakes on February 18, our primary responsibility is to make sure that our municipalities in Ontario are financially sustainable. I will quote from a letter I gave to the council and an open letter that I wrote to the citizens as well: "It is my responsibility to help ensure that all of Ontario's municipalities are viable, financially sustainable and capable of delivering the services the public deserves. I have reason to believe that a number of the former 16 lower-tier municipalities would experience significant financial challenges, given the present-day roles and responsibilities." I made it quite clear to the council that we are always willing to look at new and innovative methods of delivering services to the people of this province.

**Mr Prue:** Minister, the people of Ontario expect their government to respect democracy, first and foremost, even when you might not like the result and even when you think it might cost more money. Before the election you said, "Local residents should have the right to decide on the future of their municipality." In your platform, on which you were elected, you said, "We will put an end to dictated municipal amalgamations," and that the only amalgamations you would support would be those approved by a binding local referendum. You also said, "Democracy is rarely convenient and tidy," and that "at its heart, it means that people must have a say in how they are governed and on the future of their communities." Now you've turned your back on these lofty words and you have broken your promise with respect to the will of the people of Kawartha Lakes.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question.

**Mr Prue:** I ask you again not about whether this is saving money, but why you have broken your promise. Why have you broken the democratic will of the people of that city?

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Let me repeat once again for the member and for the people of Kawartha Lakes: As I stated in my letter quite categorically, I remain open to considering a proposal from the duly elected council of Kawartha Lakes—who are just as democratically elected

as the referendum that you spoke to—that would meet the reasonable criteria of property tax fairness to all residents and assure fiscal sustainability of all resulting communities.

We are always willing to look at new ways of delivering services to the people of this province so that they can get both the provincial government and the locally elected governments they deserve and demand.

**The Speaker:** New question.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** I'm going to resist jumping into that fray on amalgamation.

I want to come back to a very serious issue where the people of Ontario and their elected representatives are entitled to a specific answer from the Premier. Premier, I have two OICs bearing your signature, dated February 26 and March 4. I asked you earlier in question period if you felt that removing Minister Sorbara from his responsibilities at the OSC was sufficient. You stood in your place and smugly said it was. I want to know why you took another week to remove the Minister of Finance from another central agency in this scandal. Would you stand and specifically address that question?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** This is all part and parcel of the same package, I say again. The Minister of Finance has assumed his responsibilities in a most capable manner. We're very much looking forward to the presentation of his first budget. I can assure you, the member opposite, and the people of Ontario that he will continue to act in a responsible manner as a person of the utmost integrity.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, you've got the big job. You have the corner office. You have the car and driver. One of the responsibilities that comes with the job is that you come into this place and answer questions to the people of the province of Ontario. What we are seeing is the end of responsible government in the province, where you don't feel a responsibility to answer or to account for any action on the ethical lapses in your government.

Premier, I want to come back to the question that my colleague from Erie-Lincoln asked you. You won't know specifically if your Minister of Finance is under criminal investigation. You won't know if his actions are being reviewed by OSC and Revenue Canada today. So I want to ask you a specific question—and I'd like a page, if I could. Will you sign a letter to the Integrity Commissioner, Justice Coulter Osborne, asking him to contact these three agencies and to inform you and this assembly if in fact the scope of their investigations has changed? Will you do that, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Thank you very much. I appreciate the offer but, no, I will not sign this letter. The matter has been addressed, both by myself and by the Integrity Commissioner. As far as I'm concerned, the matter has been dealt with.

### GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** My question is for the Chair of Management Board. The previous government replaced many civil service functions with outside consultants and in many cases those consultants were expensive and of questionable value to the taxpayers of Ontario. Mr Minister, I'd like to know, in light of the previous government's exhaustive spending on outside consultants—which for the most part provided no benefit to the taxpayers of Ontario—what you are doing to reduce the amount spent on outside consultants by this government.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** The public should be aware that over a four-year period the previous government took outside consulting spending from \$250 million a year to \$660 million a year, a 250% increase. We've tightened the rules on consulting contracts and we've tightened the way these things are priced. Obviously we look in every case to see if our own public service can do this job. We've moved in three significant areas to try and reduce that \$660 million dramatically so the taxpayers will see value for their money.

1510

**Ms Wynne:** This is a particular area of irritation among my constituents. I'm just wondering if the minister can provide us with some specific examples and details of how he is moving toward eliminating this wasteful cost.

**Hon Mr Phillips:** Again, I remind the public that the \$660 million of outside spending on consultants was up 250% over a four-year period. Among the things we did: We insist now on contracts having a fixed price rather than these open-ended per diems. We simply will not allow this running on of open-ended per diems. There has to be a start and a finish to consulting projects.

We insist on a request for proposal; that Ontario taxpayers get the best possible per diems, what's called the favoured client price.

We also obviously look at, "Does it make sense for this to be done outside?" We've looked now at three specific examples where consulting work was done outside where it could be done within the public service dramatically cheaper—30% to 40% cheaper—and we've moved on those three specific projects. As soon as we took office, we began looking at how we can dramatically reduce that \$660 million, and we will.

### PETITIONS

#### LANDFILL

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and



"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on source water protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented by Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'll sign my name too.

#### IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

**Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to

work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I affix my signature with those of the others.

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's seniors have worked long and hard to build the outstanding quality of life achieved in our province; and

"Whereas seniors' drug benefits enable older persons to live healthier lives and avoid more extensive care in hospitals and nursing homes; and

"Whereas, in addition to their taxes, many seniors already contribute toward their prescription drugs through deductibles and dispensing fees; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed pensions already face higher costs through property taxes" and now their electricity bills;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not eliminate or reduce the provincial drug benefits provided to seniors."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents of Durham.

#### MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** Michael Prue, the New Democratic Party member from Beaches-East York, has asked me to present this petition. I do so with great pleasure. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas in the interest of true democracy the Minister of Municipal Affairs put the following question to the voters of the city of Kawartha Lakes: 'Are you in favour of a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier and 16 lower-tier municipalities?'; and

"Whereas the voters, by a clear majority on a provincially mandated ballot, answered in the affirmative;

"The undersigned demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act to respect the will of the people as expressed in a democratic vote, and restore the former municipal structure as stated in the minister's question."

That is signed by thousands of persons. I have signed it as well. What riding are you from, Mark?

**Interjection:** Brampton Centre.

**Mr Kormos:** Mark from Brampton Centre is going to deliver this to the clerks' table. Thank you kindly.

## ONTARIO POWER GENERATION AND HYDRO ONE

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I have signed it as well and agree with it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas lucrative contracts totalling \$5.6 million were awarded for various jobs at Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation by the previous Conservative government;

"Whereas these contracts were awarded not based on the principles of merit but on the practice of patronage;

"Whereas the amount of money paid out in these contracts to these friends of the Conservative Party was excessive and explains why Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation are in such poor fiscal shape;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to order a public inquiry into how these contracts were awarded and what measures can be taken to ensure such abuse of the public purse doesn't reoccur."

Michael from—

**Interjection:** York South-Weston.

**Mr Berardinetti:** —York South-Weston will deliver the petition.

## AUTISM SERVICES

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I am pleased to rise today and present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas our new Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and his Liberal government made a campaign commitment to expand funding for valued therapy for autistic children; and

"Whereas the families of autistic children continue to call upon the province to extend funding to children six years and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) funding; and

"Whereas the new Premier has admitted, 'We simply don't have enough people right now with the skills to help those children under six, let alone those over the age of six'; and

"Whereas the Liberal Premier, Dalton McGuinty, described the current cut-off age as unfair and discriminatory;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to force the government to live up to its promise and extend funding to children six and older who will benefit from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) treatment."

I've got over 800 signatures here. I affix my signature.

## ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** A petition to the Ontario government:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario and Canada, draw the attention of this House to the following:

"Whereas the Canadian beef cattle, dairy, goat and sheep industries are in a state of crisis due to the BSE problem;

"Whereas the aid package to the industry is inadequate as it does not deal with the extremely low prices nor the imminent collapse of key sectors of the rural economic community;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Canada and Ontario, urge the federal government to work with the province and their counterpart, the United States of America, to reopen the border to Canadian cattle now and to develop a long-term solution—an economic relief package—that is fair and recognizes the essential nature of these industries to Canada and Ontario.

"Furthermore, we urge the provincial agriculture minister to call on the federal government to work with the provinces to enable this crisis to come to a timely conclusion."

I will put my name on this one. Victor, you are from?

**Interjection:** Scarborough-Rouge River.

1520

## ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals by no means campaigned on raising the rates associated with the Ontario drug benefit program; and

"Whereas the majority of seniors, many of which live on a fixed income, cannot meet the expense of higher costs for essential medication; and

"Whereas seniors in Simcoe-Grey and across Ontario should never have to make the choice between eating and filling a prescription;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To cancel any plans to raise costs for prescription drugs for our seniors and to embark on making vital medication more affordable for Ontarians."

It's signed by several hundred people in my riding of Simcoe-Grey, and I too have affixed my signature.

## HOG INDUSTRY

**Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):** I have a petition from concerned citizens of the village of Curran.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, as citizens of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, are opposing the industrial hog factories planned for the area within the Nation municipality, of Pendleton, Ste-Rose-de-Prescott and St Albert.

"Whereas similar hog factories are not permitted in Quebec;



"Whereas farms are an essential component of our rural communities and must be protected; ...

"Whereas Ontario is still addressing environmental laws and health issues associated with industrial hog factories and the spraying of pig manure;

"Whereas the South Nation River water pollution concerns are not yet resolved;

"Whereas an environmental assessment of aquifers and groundwater has not been done; ...

"Whereas waste/sewage from pigs potentially endanger the water supply and soil;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure the safety of the citizens of Glengarry and united counties of Prescott-Russell will be protected against the known dangers associated with industrial hog factories....

"We also ask that no further industrial hog factories be allowed in our area before environmental health studies are completed.

"We ask that hog factories be designated as industries and not as agricultural."

I gladly sign this petition.

#### ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Yearley, Ontario, within the electoral district of Parry Sound-Muskoka experiences frequent and prolonged power outages; and

"Whereas the power outages have become a health and safety issue to the residents of the community and the students who visit the outdoor education centre;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy instruct Hydro One to conduct an investigation of the distribution and feeder lines that serve Yearley and take the necessary steps to ensure reliable energy through ongoing forestry maintenance and required line improvements."

I agree with this, and I attach my signature.

#### LANDFILL

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** "Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of Site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of Site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'll sign my name to that too.

#### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario and Canada, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"Whereas the Canadian beef cattle, dairy, goat and sheep industries are in a state of crisis due to the BSE problem;

"Whereas the aid package to the industry is inadequate as it does not deal with the extremely low prices nor the imminent collapse of key sectors of the rural economic community;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Canada and Ontario, urge the federal government to work with their counterparts in the United States of America to reopen the border to Canadian cattle now and develop a long-term solution and an economic relief package that is fair and recognizes the essential nature of these industries to Canada and Ontario.

"Furthermore, we urge the provincial agriculture minister to call on the federal government to work with the provinces to enable this crisis to come to a timely conclusion."

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government has said in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors and are now

considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To halt the consideration of imposing an income test, delisting drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan or putting in place user fees for seniors, and to maintain the present Ontario drug benefit plan for seniors to cover medication."

I support this and I affix my signature.

#### LIABILITY INSURANCE

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** I have another petition from constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas liability insurance is a necessary coverage;

"Whereas the rising cost of liability insurance is of great concern;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to review liability insurance rates and take steps to ensure reasonable rates, now and in the future."

I support this and attach my signature.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### INTERIM SUPPLY

##### CRÉDITS PROVISOIRES

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2004, and ending June 30, 2004, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2004-05 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Mr Sorbara has moved government notice of motion 16. Mr Sorbara?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** It's my pleasure to begin the debate on interim supply this afternoon. As you know—*Applause.*

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I hear the sound of just two hands clapping, but that's enough.

I note that my parliamentary assistant will be speaking on this motion as well. Just to set the interim supply motion in some context, sir: As you know, all of the money that we raise through our various taxation mechanisms, and, more important, the way in which we spend those funds is done by the authority of this Parliament. The motion on interim supply is one of the mechanisms under which this Parliament votes the appropriation, payment of funds through the consolidated revenue fund to all of the various agencies and individuals that look to us for support. That's what's called interim supply.

This interim supply motion is dealing with the period from the beginning of the new fiscal year on the first day

of April until the end of June—a three-month period. You might ask, "Why are we dealing with a three-month period?" The answer is really quite simple: because during that period, sometime in the middle of May, later on in the springtime, I will have the honour of presenting our government's first budget in this Legislature. I know the whip is looking forward to that, as am I, as is the province, as are we all. With the budget, the budget papers are presented and the bills and the supply motions that will cover that fiscal year are presented.

1530

I want to spend my time in this interim supply debate talking about some of the work we have done on this side of the House and in government in preparation for that budget. Specifically, I want to talk about the opportunity I had over the course of the past six weeks to participate in pre-budget consultations that took me into 10 different communities in 14 separate consultations with the people of Ontario. This is first time I've done this. It's the first time that a Liberal government has done this in 13 years.

I should say, before we set out, that I was a little bit apprehensive because of the amount of time and the commitment involved, not just on my part—I'm here to give my time to this kind of exercise—but to the various people in the ministry who organized these consultations. We were in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Ottawa, and we had a marvellous consultation, en français, in Casselman, and we were in Windsor, Stratford, Brampton and Vaughan. We had number of consultations in Toronto. The thing that moved me was the extent to which ordinary men and women across this province gave of their time to come and engage in that process.

I have to tell you that, as I said, going in I was somewhat reluctant. It is perhaps the most important thing I've done as Minister of Finance in the several months that I've occupied and had these responsibilities. In every single one of those consultations a new theme was identified, a new reminder about the way in which we need to be concerned, and not just with the major issues of fiscal balance and figuring out a way to live within our means. That's very important and it was part of consultations.

For example, let me tell you about our consultations in Thunder Bay. To be reminded about the extent to which the northern part of this province has been excluded from the economic growth that inspired the southern part of the province really does focus one's attention; to hear individual after individual stand up during the three hours that we were together to say that somehow the north had been left out, that in northern Ontario there's no concern about property assessments going up and building new highways and roads, that the concern is, "Our children are leaving us. The opportunities are not here"—all of us from the ministry had an opportunity to hear that firsthand. It focuses one's attention, and one realizes that one has to respond to those needs in presenting a budget.

We were in Stratford. It was a wonderful afternoon in what I describe as the entertainment capital of North America because of that wonderful festival. We were reminded over and over again that the circumstances of



small municipalities have been ignored over the past eight years by the demands to repave roads, repair bridges and maintain health care services handed down to them in that great Who Does What exercise are all burdens that are quite significant. In Stratford we had the opportunity to hear from Ontario's great agricultural communities. If you had any doubt about the special circumstances of Ontario farmers and of those who grow the food that feeds all 12 million of us, then you wouldn't have any doubt after you participated in that pre-budget consultation.

We continued that discussion in Casselman, when my friend for Perth-Middlesex helped organize that—I see him sitting over here and I want to thank him publicly for making that pre-budget consultation in his riding so successful. I was with the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell in Casselman, the first time ever that this government held this sort of ministerial pre-budget consultation in French. Perhaps for some that's not a significant event, but for me and my ministry, and for la francophonie de la province de l'Ontario, c'était une occasion très importante.

J'étais très fier d'être le ministre qui a commencé le processus de consulter la population de l'Ontario au moins une fois en français, et nous le faisons encore une fois.

I'll never forget the farmer who said to me, "I have framed a cheque I recently received for the sale of one of my cattle." The cheque was in the amount of 16 cents. This really focuses how severely mad cow disease has decimated an industry. I know that my colleague in Ottawa the finance minister took some initiatives to deal in part with the impact of mad cow disease on agriculture, but more certainly needs to be done.

Of course the consultations around the greater Toronto area reminded me—as if I needed reminding—of the great burden of responsibility we have to start to build a new generation of infrastructure, whether in transportation or affordable housing or water mains or sewers, all that sort of stuff, the foundations upon which the next generation of economic growth will be based in this part of the province, which is growing so rapidly.

In Ottawa I heard one individual stand up and say, "Mr Sorbara, while you are considering all of the big issues of balancing and taxation, do not forget that the most vulnerable in this province are looking to you and your budget for some gesture, some small reflection that you understand the plight of our province's most vulnerable and that you will be responding."

It was a marvellous opportunity, and I can assure the people, through these remarks and during the course of this debate, that the material that was brought to us and the time those individuals who participated gave to those consultations will be reflected. As I said at the close of almost every meeting, it is my hope that the individuals who participated will be able to see the issues they brought to the consultation reflected when we present the budget.

But in the meantime, we need to do some work here. We need to ensure that we can pay our bills in a timely

fashion. That is why we are bringing forward this interim supply motion. It gives me great pleasure to speak to it and to express my hope that all members will support interim supply when comes to time to vote.

**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I am very pleased to join in the debate following the Minister of Finance with respect to this interim supply motion. It is a very important issue, obviously, in terms of the finances of the House.

I want to speak on couple of matters, because this is a debate where we can discuss a number of areas. One is that I am very pleased about a letter I received from the Minister of Transportation just last week with respect to GO Transit. As everyone knows, GO Transit is something the city of Barrie and the town of Innisfil have been after for many years, since it was taken away from them through budgetary measures by the NDP government in 1992. We've been diligently working to get it back into our area.

I want to read the letter from the minister with respect to this issue, because I asked him about the status of GO Transit rail service from Bradford to Barrie. He reported, "I have met with His Worship Robert Hamilton, mayor of Barrie, and several city staff members to discuss the GO Transit extension to Barrie. I indicated to the mayor that the government is committed to the project and that issues such as cost-sharing will need to be resolved in the near term."

I would just move away from the text. It is very good to know that the government of the day is committed to this project, because it is a very important project.

"As you are aware, consistent with the approach for all municipalities serviced by GO Transit, there is a requirement for the municipality to contribute one third of the costs for service expansion.

"The property appraisal for the rail corridor from Bradford to Barrie, owned by Barrie, has been completed and will be sent to Barrie shortly. This appraisal was deemed necessary to allow for a fair and accurate evaluation of the corridor.

"One of the important next steps is to determine how Barrie wants to proceed in resolving its financial contribution. One option would be for the city to transfer its ownership of the corridor to GO Transit."

**1540**

I move away from the text again. As I understand it, GO Transit is in the process of doing an environmental assessment as we speak. Also, I know that the city of Barrie has identified, in conjunction with GO Transit, a location for the GO Transit service.

Back to the text. He says, "Alternatively, Barrie could retain the corridor and develop an access-lease agreement with GO Transit to use it.

"MTO officials are now finalizing a Canada strategic infrastructure fund agreement with the federal government that includes funding for the GO Transit expansion to Barrie.

"Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention."

I want to thank the Minister of Transportation for showing, I would say, prudence and also some leadership in dealing with this particular issue. It is an important issue in my riding. Back in 1996, CN, in their plans to get out of the rail service, were going to be taking up the tracks, but we, as the government of the day, were able to work with the city of Barrie and contribute \$2 million toward the \$3.1-million purchase price of the track and maintain those lines. It's important for the area and for transportation in general that you have GO Transit service up to the city of Barrie because of the tremendous population growth in the area. It'll allow Highway 400 pressures to be relaxed. There are also environmental concerns. It's just better urban planning to have GO Transit come to a community that's growing as much as the city of Barrie is and the respective communities all the way up there.

Another issue I want to deal with is the announcement by the government last week with respect to funding for autistic children. As we know, we had questions today by the member from Sudbury with respect to the announcement. In essence, the announcement made by the government was to increase funding for the IBI program as it currently exists, treatment for children up to the age of six. There was no commitment to funding for children six and older, notwithstanding that the Premier made a commitment during the election that there would be funding for those children over the age of six.

That's a petition I've been presenting in the Legislature for the last couple of weeks, or since the Legislature has been open, with respect to the Premier living up to the commitment, because he was quoted as saying on this issue, "We simply don't have enough people right now with the skills to help those children under six, let alone those over the age of six." That was a quote from him last session during the fall, but he did make a commitment during the election last year to fund IBI for children over the age of six. Now we find, based on the announcement made last week by the minister for children, that they're not going to live up to that commitment.

There's an article about this today in the Barrie Examiner. The headline is, "Family Confused by Autism Plan." It says, "This is not going to help our kids today." There's a picture of a mother, Donna Currie, playing with her autistic son Joshua, age five, "who has been waiting for treatment for two years."

This issue obviously is very important, and it's important for two reasons: first, because of the waiting list that exists for children six and under, which has impacted young children like Joshua with respect to this issue, but also, because of the government's position that they will not fund or provide IBI treatment for children over the age of six, it certainly leaves a lot of parents in fear about what's going to happen.

Looking at this particular news release, she states, "Next year, Joshua goes to school full-time and the plan is to take him out of class three afternoons per week for the one-on-one therapy with the worker. Right now the

education system won't accommodate the worker in school."

We don't have the Minister of Education here today, but the Minister of Education says a lot of things and doesn't follow up on any of them, as far as I know. Last week I was talking about getting a meeting with the Prince of Wales school with respect to the statement he made about closing schools. I have yet to get a date from him with respect to a meeting with the Minister of Education.

But here we have a situation where it looks like we've got children slipping through the cracks. We have a Minister of Children who is supposed to look after autistic children, and we have a Minister of Education who is dealing with no support plan for autistic children at all. So they're not only falling through the cracks but it seems to be that one ministry is not talking to another ministry. We've got waiting lists with respect to children six and under, and we don't have an education system that is set up to help these children.

The announcement last week was, "Ontario is spending an extra \$120 million over the next three years to fund autism treatments and increase the number of therapists, but the move Friday was criticized as falling short of meeting the needs of kids with the learning disability."

"Last year, the province spent about \$41 million on autism, including funding special intensive behavioural intervention treatment for kids under six."

That's the situation in my home riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. The Toronto Star reported, "Autism Aid Cap Stays at Age 6; Liberals Double Program Funding but Older Children Still Face Cut-off."

This is certainly not a good day with respect to parents who have children who are dealing with autism. Because the ministry has increased funding, I don't know how that is going to address the waiting lists with respect to children of six and under who need it. From the situation we have with Joshua, we do know that he is going to be going to school. The education system does not provide anything for that, yet the child is going to school.

Certainly this government has not addressed the issue, and they are certainly not living up to their promises. Again they're not living up to their promises with respect to what they said with respect to autistic children over the age of six. It's too bad, not only on a human tragedy basis in terms of not caring about people who have needs which the Liberal government has chosen not to meet, but also because certainly the mark of a society is in dealing with people who really do need care. Here we have a situation with respect to autistic children, and the government does not address that; they decide to sabre-rattle. The Attorney General has still got his troops out there with respect to dealing with children over the age of six in terms of a litigation issue. How it's a litigation issue—I don't know why he would continue to deal with it that it way. But that's how they decided to deal with it.

Another issue that I find perplexing, because the Liberals aren't living up to their promise, is something in terms of their own management, how they screwed up



the MPP birth certificate. We have this update. I got my number 9 MPP birth certificate update. I can tell you, I've been a member for nine years, and I have never seen the problems with respect to birth certificates, and we handle them right out of my own office. We did it ourselves for many years, and then they moved it over to the registry office.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Tascona:** If I'm going to be allowed to speak, because I guess everyone over on the other side is bored, I'm going to read this number 9 MPP birth certificate update. I really appreciate this. It is talking about operational improvements and the minister's message here. He is very pleased to keep me informed about their progress. I just wish they could solve the problem so I wouldn't have so many problems. I have people phoning me all the time; I have two staff dedicated to dealing with birth certificates. Before the kafuffle when they took over government here, I didn't have any staff working on it, because everyone went to the registry office. Now all of a sudden the registry office says, "Go see your local MPP because the government has made some changes with respect to this program," and I have to deal with it. The last I read, there was a birth certificate backlog of about 70,000. Now, he is not addressing that.

1550

What he says here is, "The March break peak travel period is now behind us and the ORG is currently processing on average 823 birth certificates per day, up from an average of 734 per day last week." He is talking about the staff working overtime on the processing.

What we have here is a real problem. He says, "Our current call volume has increased by 60% over previous years. The ministry is currently examining ways to improve this service. For now, we suggest people call during off-peak hours to get through to the office more quickly," and he gives the best times to contact the office.

I really appreciate this update. I guess when I get to update number 30, we'll see what's going to be happening with respect to the MPP birth certificate update. I really appreciate that. What I'd like the minister to do is solve the problem and quit putting people out with respect to how to deal with these issues.

I don't have the solutions. All we're trying to do is solve the problem with respect to trying to get people their birth certificates. That's all I can do as a lowly MPP. That's what we are paid to do, and I am pleased to help my constituents, even though it is supposed to be provided out of the registry office in the city of Barrie. Now it has been pushed over to the MPPs to handle this. I really appreciate that update number 9 from the ministry. It's really coming in handy for me, and I know I will use it.

The next topic I want to speak about is, I had a meeting last week with our local branch of the Lung Association with respect to smoking. They asked me to look at this issue because they are distressed. Once again, the Liberal government made a promise during the

campaign—I think this is their list of promises; 231 is the last one I got, but who's counting? I don't know if we're counting the number of promises that have been broken. But the promise that was made in the last election was that they were going to make Ontario 100% smoke-free in public and workplaces. That was the commitment they were going to make. They were saying, "We're going to implement this over a three-year period." Well, we haven't seen anything to date. The Lung Association is concerned whether, first of all, you're going to do it at all, and, second, they're saying, "Why are you waiting?"

I remember being on that side, in terms of the Legislature, listening to you saying, "We're going to do these things with respect to dealing with smoke-free places." I think the program that was in place at the time—the municipalities were working very hard on it. I know the Minister of Agriculture can appreciate that because he was the mayor of St Thomas at one time. I commend the municipalities because I think up to 63% of municipalities were smoke-free. That includes my city of Barrie, and I know the town of Innisfil has moved in that direction. The Liberal opposition of the day made a big issue about that, saying they were going to make it 100%.

All I'm saying is that I'm putting you on notice that the Lung Association isn't too pleased with your timetable. They're a little bit concerned whether you're even going to do it, because it is a very serious issue.

**Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland):** What's the timetable?

**Mr Tascona:** The timetable is your timetable.

**Mr Rinaldi:** Where was yours? You didn't have one.

**Mr Tascona:** Our timetable—I'm probably going to consider it seriously, because they're so upset. I am very upset about it too. I've got a button here. I'm not going to show it here, because that wouldn't be right, but it says, "A 100% smoke-free Simcoe county. The time is now." I totally agree with that. "A 100% smoke-free Ontario. The time is now." I totally agree with that too. I am seriously looking at this issue; I wanted to speak about it today. Maybe it's going to take a private member, a lowly MPP like myself, to get this government focusing on the promises they committed to. Whether they are going to do that is another issue, but I want to put them on notice—and I'm putting them on notice now—that that's a serious issue. The Ontario Lung Association is looking for action.

I also got a letter today from the Ontario action group on tobacco with respect to their concern about the lack of action by this government on a smoke-free Ontario. That's another promise that was made, and I guess we're going to have to see whether they're going to do it. We know today that they didn't live up to their promise with respect to autistic children. Now we're going to find out whether they're going to do anything about a smoke-free Ontario, but I digress.

The next subject I want to touch on—because I know the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member for Hamilton Mountain, is very in tune today, listening—is the drug benefit program. I don't know where this one

is coming from. I have a lot of respect for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I think he's one of the hardest-working ministers this government has—probably the toughest portfolio. But who is talking to him about this drug benefit program? I got a letter from the minister on this particular issue, and the response that was given—this was about drug coverage for seniors—was basically that no final decisions have yet been made with respect to changes to the disability benefit program. Certainly, I think he's probably been deluged with letters on this particular issue.

During the campaign, of course, which is long forgotten by the Liberal government—in fact, it is probably irrelevant to their thinking process today—they made a commitment that they would make the drug benefit plan better for seniors. What they didn't say was that they were going to decide which seniors the drug plan would be of greater benefit to. All I can say is that I've got petitions galore here with respect to this. Seniors are concerned about a means test, about the delisting of drugs and about the imposing of user fees on seniors.

I want to put the government on notice—I know the Minister of Finance was here at one time, in terms of introducing this, but I want to put him on notice—that this is something they shouldn't be doing. This is not fair to seniors. Certainly they didn't run on a campaign that they were going to means-test seniors or were going to put user fees on seniors or were going to delist drugs for seniors.

In closing, I just want to say that this is an issue this government has to take very seriously—much more seriously than they've taken the birth certificate program. As I said earlier, I've got MPP birth certificate update number nine right here. I'm probably going to get up to number 30 before they ever solve this, but who knows? Who's counting? I got number nine today, and I was very pleased to get it from the minister.

That's all I have to say, and I look forward to further debate.

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** We don't have a whole lot of time, because the government, of course, bullied its way through the rules process. But New Democrats aren't going to be cut out of the action, not by a long shot. As a matter of fact, Michael Prue, the finance critic for the New Democratic caucus, is going to be speaking for most of the time allotted to the New Democratic Party caucus here at Queen's Park.

You've noticed the ties, Speaker. You've noticed the ties. Today's tie is stinky cheese. It's a political statement. I want to thank the art students at North Hastings High School in Bancroft, who, before Christmastime, watching television and the debates, said, "What you need, Kormos, is some of these ties with political statements." This one is stinky cheese. Clearly these students are saying there's something stinky going on here—something rotten in the state of Denmark, so to speak. If you saw the one I was wearing last week with all the flames on it, clearly those students were saying this province is going to hell in a handbasket with this government at the helm.

Yesterday I was at a wonderful event at the Lions Club in Welland. We were celebrating the 95th birthday of Matilda Barilla. Let me tell you why it was fascinating: Just five years ago I had been there with her at her 90th birthday and gave her a scroll signed by the Premier of the day, and five years later I gave her a scroll signed by, well, another Premier of the day. She was born in Saskatchewan in 1909, of Hungarian parents, went back to Hungary, came back to Saskatchewan after the First World War, then moved to Welland in 1941 after her husband came there, built the house on Fitch Street and still lives in that house. The house is built like a Saskatchewan farmhouse. Ninety-five-year-old Matilda Barilla is still living on her own.

I said, "Mrs Barilla, you have survived any number of Premiers—countless Premiers, countless governments. I predict that you will be celebrating your 100th birthday five years from now; I will not predict the name of the Premier five years from now. You've enjoyed sufficient diversity up to this point." I suspect Mrs Barilla will continue to. I simply want to acknowledge and congratulate this woman. We were celebrating, of course, decades and generations of hard work and tremendous contribution on her part to this country.

1600

You know, one of the things that a whole lot of folks—of course, her friends, her neighbours and her family are aging too. They're getting on. One of the things that people raised throughout the course of that afternoon at the Lions Club down in Welland—person after person, man, woman, one after the other—was their fear, their trepidation, at the prospect of this government tinkering with the Ontario drug benefit program. Person after person came up to me, as they have at every other event I've been to down in Niagara Centre over the course of weekends and over the course of the three-month vacation the Liberals took within weeks of getting elected, expressing incredible trepidation about the prospect of seniors getting hammered by the government. You know the types of correspondence you've been getting, the types of phone calls, very polite but firm messages from seniors, for instance. The United Senior Citizens of Ontario has organized, among others, a campaign to fight back against any tinkering with the Ontario drug benefit program. You see, seniors like Mrs Barilla—that's why I mentioned Mrs Barilla, 95 years—who raised kids, raised grandchildren, built homes, worked hard, built cities, built a country, deserve more than this government is offering up to them. Senior citizens like those are worried that this government is going to tinker with the Ontario drug benefit program. They point out that seniors don't have the opportunity to work overtime. They don't have employment bonuses, salary bonuses. For many of them, a lifetime of savings, which was a whole lot of money during the course of saving it, over the course of years has turned into not so much money after all.

As a matter of fact, when I was a kid—you'll know this, Ms Mossop—I remember folks used to worry about



not living long enough. Now I talk to more and more senior citizens and, tragically, they're worried about living too long. You know what I mean? They're worried about living too long. What a tragedy that people who work hard all of their lives, who pay for homes usually two and three times over, who raise kids and help raise grandkids and then send them to college and university, have to fear living too long because of increased natural gas prices, increased electricity prices. Come April 1, senior citizens are going to get whacked big time; make no mistake about it.

We're looking at the prospect of yet another group of potential homeless people here in the province of Ontario, people who own homes at risk of being homeless, people who can't afford to live in their own homes any more. I'm not talking about people living in, oh, \$850,000 and million-dollar homes up in Rosedale and places like that. I'm talking about folks living in homes they built with their own hands. When you dug a basement, you didn't call a contractor; you and your partner, two spouses, got out there and shovelled by hand and wheelbarrowed the dirt away and laid the block by hand. I'm old enough to remember witnessing that. Those are the kinds of folks I'm talking about down where I come from, who are afraid of being homeless, who are afraid of living too long, and we see a government that, rather than acknowledging the tremendous contributions that seniors have made to our community, to our province, to this country, is ready to just shoo them away and tell them to wait in line.

New Democrats say no to abandoning seniors. New Democrats say no to abandoning the universality of the Ontario drug benefit program. New Democrats are going to stand up for seniors, are going to stand up with seniors, shoulder to shoulder, as they organize and mobilize and fight back against this or any other government that's going to condemn seniors to even greater poverty, condemn seniors to the risk of being homeless or condemn seniors to early searches for beds in seniors' homes because they can't afford to live in their own. I say that our folks and our grandfolks have worked too hard, too long and for too many generations, building with so much sacrifice—too much sacrifice—building with incredible hardship and hard work, for us to let them down now. New Democrats are going to stand with those seniors and we're going to insist that this government respect those seniors who have contributed so much and who deserve far better.

**Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill):** I have some difficulty understanding the arguments on this. We are asking that the interim supply bill be approved—I wonder if the NDP is against approving those expenditures—so we can take care of our seniors and everyone in our system who needs to receive some assistance.

I believe this issue should be dealt with quickly. We should approve the interim supply bill and make sure we do what we said we were going to do. We understand that there are some challenges the Minister of Finance must address, in particular that the member from Oak

Ridges promised to give \$50 million to public transportation but never delivered. So the Minister of Finance needs this approval today to be able to pay those bills and to provide the services that are needed.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to have the member withdraw an incorrect, false statement that he has just made.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** That's not a point of order.

**Mr Racco:** Mr Speaker, I would like to make clear to my friend, as he should know, that he was the one who took a fake cheque, publicly took a picture and told the world he was going to give \$50 million to public transportation in the region of York. He never gave the money, months after that, and therefore I think it's important for the record that people know—

**Mr Klees:** A point of privilege, Mr Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Points of privilege require written notice, as far as I know.

**Mr Kormos:** Unless it arises at the very moment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll do the speaking here, member for Niagara Centre. I'll take the advice of the table before I would ever take it from you.

**Mr Klees:** It arises out of the statement—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just take your seat for a moment.

The table has confirmed what the member for Niagara Centre said. So, your point of privilege.

**Mr Klees:** I would like to thank the table and the member from Niagara Centre.

Speaker, this is very serious, and I'm going to cut some slack to the new member from Thornhill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just get to it quickly, please.

**Mr Klees:** It's important that he understands. I'm not taking exception to his intent, but he cannot stand in his place and make the kind of reference, implications and inferences as to my intention and my actions as a minister of the crown.

We took actions that made a specific commitment to York region. Those funds were incorporated into the budget of the Ministry of Transportation. For the member to leave the House and the public under the impression that somehow this was, to use his term, a fake gesture on the part of the Minister of Transportation is wrong. It's an affront to me as a member of this Legislature, to me as a member of the government that at the time made that commitment—I would ask the member to withdraw that. I understand his sentiment, but I would ask him to withdraw that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. I'll ask the member to consider withdrawing, or at least I'll ask the member if he wants to withdraw.

**Mr Racco:** Mr Speaker, I don't see the need to withdraw. What I said—

**The Deputy Speaker:** No, we don't need to have it repeated. I would then ask you to carefully choose the way you describe what you saw and how you perceived it so you can in fact get on with the debate.

**Mr Racco:** I thank you. If you wish me to restate the intent of my statement, I repeat, Mr Speaker, that a

cheque was given to the chair of the region by the member from Oak Ridges, the past member for Thornhill and other politicians, publicly stating that those \$50 million were given for public transportation to the region of York. That cheque was never really given.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think the point has been made, so why don't you just move on.

**Mr Racco:** I just wanted to make sure, Mr Speaker, that the member from Oak Ridges is quite aware of the fact, and I wanted to remind him of that.

Having said that, I wanted to make sure that the House is quite aware that this bill will let us pay the bills for our seniors, for nursing homes, for hospitals, for doctors and for municipalities in need of funding, particularly for public transportation. The Tories, back in the year 2000, removed any assistance for public transportation in Ontario. And today, as the *Star* did clearly quote, we have a major problem in public transportation because of what the Tories have done, and I would suggest to you that the minister responsible was partly the member from Oak Ridges.

Having said that, though, I also think that we must deal with this supply bill, because we need to pay the bills for social assistance and for the children's aid societies, and therefore I encourage all of us to support the bill.

1610

**Mr Klees:** Well, I want to thank the member from Thornhill for reconfirming, in three different ways, the \$50-million commitment that I made as Minister of Transportation to the people of York region for public transit. That \$50-million commitment was, in fact, included as a part of the budgeting of the Ministry of Transportation specifically focused on York region. To the member's point, it is now up to this government to ensure that that commitment that I made as the Minister of Transportation is in fact fulfilled so that it doesn't fall into the great pit of the many other broken promises that this government has made, and continues to make, every single day.

I'm pleased to speak to the interim supply bill.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Klees:** I seem to have stirred the pot somehow. The member from Thornhill is very upset now. He feels embarrassed, as a matter of fact, that he has given the member from Oak Ridges such incredible play on the parliamentary channel. I'm sure that my constituents appreciate this. In fact, I'd like to invite him to my next fundraising dinner. He can do the introduction and make reference to the many, many commitments that we did make, as the previous government, to public transit.

But we're talking today about the interim supply bill. And yes, the government needs this bill in order to pay the various bills, the various commitments that government has made.

Having said that, I have to say that the people of this province, as they're watching this debate, are, I'm certain, questioning the wisdom of allowing this government to make any decision about allocation of funds anywhere.

Within a very short period of time—and the chief government whip knows, because he's looking at me now with this knowing look saying, "I know we've made a huge mistake as the government." He's not feeling good as a Liberal, although he's consistent as a Liberal. Having made the commitments, as was said earlier, they very quickly forget and then they make the next commitment. They make the commitments with the same dollars.

My son had that problem, when he first started off, with his allowance. He would tell me that he was spending his allowance on this, and a couple of hours later he would said "Dad, I'm going to spend my allowance on this," and before you knew it, he had an allowance deficit.

What we have here now with this government is, in fact, an incredible credibility deficit because what the people of this province have heard over the last number of months is a Premier, members who were running as candidates—they heard them make wonderful promises. I have to admit to members opposite, on occasion I would get up and I'd read the promise of the day, and I would say, "You know, that makes good sense." Now, having been at the table at cabinet and having known the reality of the circumstances that the province faced in terms of the challenges of the year, whether that be SARS, whether that be mad cow disease, whether that be West Nile virus, and whether that be the challenges of an electricity blackout that affected the entire eastern seaboard, we knew that the promises that were being made by this government were impossible to keep.

We have pages here and they've learned right and wrong. And they know that you shouldn't be making a commitment that you can't keep. They know better. I'm sure that even as young people observing the political process, there is a certain cynicism that's creeping in and they're asking themselves, "Well, if it's OK for governments, if it's OK for the leader of a political party, if it's OK for the Premier of a party to break a promise, what does that mean to the rest of us?" What really is it saying about what our society is doing with standards? What is it saying about ethics in government today?

I believe that it's actually a very sad day for Ontario, because although we have the fundamentals in place—and no doubt we'll hear when the Minister of Finance, who should have resigned, stepped aside, frankly, while this investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Ontario Securities Commission and Canada Revenue Agency is taking place and overseeing some of the dealings of the company with which he was affiliated—he really should have stepped aside and allowed someone else to develop that budget.

Nevertheless, he'll stand in his place in this House and will no doubt give the people of this province the details about how strong the fundamentals are in this province. He'll speak to the strength of our economy. He'll speak to the fundamentals that are in place in this economy that have, in fact, contributed to the significant job growth, the significant stability of the Canadian economy. He'll



stand in his place and do that. At the same time, he will claim that there are billions of dollars of deficit and, as a result of that, will not be able to comply, will not be able to deliver the promises that he made to the people of this province. At that point, he slips one more level into that great credibility deficit.

The people of this province know full well that it's one thing to look for excuses and it's yet something else to take on the responsibilities of leadership, to do what has to be done to ensure that the economic affairs of the province are in order. That is why he has the front benches of ministers, so that as the finance minister he can say to the ministers—and if the finance minister isn't prepared to do it, surely the Chair of Management Board would have the responsibility to do so—"Look, there have been extenuating circumstances, unforeseen circumstances, that have put pressure on the province of Ontario, on the finances of the province of Ontario, and I'm giving you your marching orders, ministers. Minister of Finance, go back to your ministry and find a way to deal with some of the challenges that we're facing."

Every minister has the responsibility, then, through a program review, to go back to their various budgets and say, "Where do we find efficiencies? Where do we find savings?" So that at the end of the day, no different than people in this place who have had business experience—and those who are watching who have businesses know that you have to go back to the drawing board. You have to go back to the books and say, "You know, we can't make this expenditure today, this year. We have to defer certain projects to the following fiscal year." We do that because it is the fiscal and practical thing to do in order to meet our responsibilities as good fiscal managers. This Minister of Finance has failed to do that. He has failed to live up to the commitment of being fiscally responsible. This Premier has failed to live up to the responsibilities to act in a responsible way.

I believe that as the people of this province see debate relating to interim supply, as they watch this government over the ensuing number of weeks and months, they will draw the conclusion that there was a lot of wishful thinking, very little credibility and a huge deficit of leadership in the political party in this provincial government.

There is an answer. Coming out of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, we have provided a dissenting report that is available to people. They can read it and see how it should and could have been done. It's still not too late. The Minister of Finance should read it. It really should be required reading for every member of the government. Then, let's get together and do this right.

1620

**Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York):** We are here today to talk about interim supply. I can't think of anything that we would stand up here and talk about that could possibly be less controversial. Here we have a government, as any government, that needs to raise the funds in order to pay the bills in a time before the budget

is presented. That's what this is all about. Of course the government needs to do this and of course we need to debate it. But I think this goes a little bit beyond interim supply; this goes to the whole heart of where this government is going to go in the interim period between today, when this is being debated and they are asking for funds in which to pay the bills, and budget day, when the whole crunch comes down.

It was my privilege and my honour to be part of the finance committee travelling this province in the very cold months of January and February, going to municipalities across this province, to the north, to eastern Ontario, to southwestern Ontario, and here in Toronto, to hear from a great many people. In fact, I believe we heard over 150 deputations in the period of some three weeks. We heard people on a broad range of where they thought this budget should go, what this government should be doing and how the money should be spent. With very few exceptions, almost all of those 150 people talked about the needs. They talked about the social deficit in this province. They talked about the neglect that had happened through many long years in Ontario and were, with hope in their eyes, asking this government to please do something.

We had students who came and talked about the sad plight of their schools. We had teachers who talked about the same plight, and principals, we had superintendents and we had school boards. They told us a great many things which I believe all of us already knew, that our schools in many locations are crumbling, that the schools have leaky roofs, that the schools don't have enough textbook or computers. They told us about the sad state of children there who simply do not have enough money to participate in many of the programs that were once offered for nothing, and for which they are now being charged. They asked the committee to please make sure that the necessary funds were there in order that the school system that at one time was considered the pride and joy, the jewel of Ontario, be restored. They pointed to Rozanski and the many recommendations that he made to the previous government, recommendations that they believe, and I think everyone believes, need to be carried out as expeditiously as possible.

We had one deputant who talked at great length about her children, and she brought them with her to show and tell us exactly what is happening with the neglect in the schools. I believe her son was in grade 8. She told us point blank that her son started school in the year that the previous government was first elected, and that throughout his eight years in the public school system he had seen the neglect of that system. He had always been without those things which she felt were necessary for him to have a good education. Then she pointed out a very real truism: If what is to be accomplished by this government is going to take the full four years of the mandate, her son is going to be finished grade 12. If it takes the full four years, he will never have seen a school system which existed before and which we hope one day to have again. He will never have experienced it in his

entire school life, where there were books and there were computers and there were librarians and there were school monitors and there were opportunities for after-school education and drama clubs and the like. All of those things are missing from his school now, and if it takes four years, they will be missing for his entire school life.

We heard people from the north with their very real problems that are experienced due to distance, due to lack of funding, due to lack of education, the lack of jobs. I have to tell you that the most poignant person who came to talk to us had something to say that I think shocked all members of the committee—certainly me from Toronto, who had never understood in a universal program, or one that I thought was universal, where all children of immigrant groups who do not have English or French as a first language are entitled to ESL training—we take it as a given in southern Ontario that children who come to our school system, who do not speak English or French as a first language, are entitled to have training so that they can catch up with their peers and will know the language of instruction. We learned, quite sadly, that children in the north don't have that same experience. Yes, if children are from an immigrant family and they do not speak English or French, it is provided. But if they are First Canadians and speak Ojibway or Cree and come to the school without knowing any English or French at all, there is no money for them.

We learned, and I think that is very sad in this day and age, that this is still happening in Ontario. We have an obligation to those children to spend the monies, if only now—I don't know why it was never done before; it was absolute news to me—within the school system to make sure that our First Nations children are on an equal footing, at least on an equal footing, with new immigrant children and that they have an opportunity, to their full potential, to learn Canada's official languages—one of the two—and to be able, in the language of instruction, to understand. As the deputant told us, what invariably happens is that they come before us, they find out that they do not understand the language, they start to become behaviour problems, they fall behind in the school work, and the next thing you know they are out of school, too often even before they are 12 years of age. We need, as a province, to ensure that there is an equal opportunity for all of our children, particularly those in the north, and I would put special emphasis on our First Nations, who have not been treated terribly well since Confederation.

We heard about the plight of the poor and how monies were needed for them. We heard about the very difficult times they were all having, whether they were on Ontario Works or on ODSP payments, that they had not had a raise in nine years—nine years of absolutely the same money while everything else has gone up due to inflation, nine years of having an apartment at \$900 a month when you only receive \$930 on ODSP, nine years of seeing that you don't have enough food and that you need to go to the food banks.

They had very simple suggestions to the committee that I hope the committee and the minister will look at,

after we are finished with interim supply, that this government can do what the government of Newfoundland has done and other governments are considering across the country: that they not claw back the federal payments that are given in good faith by the federal government to our very poorest people, that they not claw them back but in fact allow them to keep those monies so that their children, at least, can have a start in life, so that their children, at least, will not know hunger, so their children, at least, can have shoes on to go to school. It was very poignant and very telling how important that is and how that must be included in the upcoming budget.

We have heard the plight of the hospitals, how P3s are not working and how they're costing so much money. We heard from daycare advocates that there has been no real additional daycare provided in this province in many years, how the staff who work there are underpaid and overworked, and that the waiting lists continue to grow, particularly in our cities.

We heard from universities and colleges that they are straining without the necessary funds and from the students who are forced to pay higher and higher levels of tuition. Although those tuition fees may be frozen by this government, they are at record high levels and are not sustainable in the long term.

We heard about seniors who felt very sad, having trusted this government and having thought that they would be protected by this government, when the Premier floated the idea of charging them for much of their bills related to medical expenses and to prescription drugs; how they felt betrayed, in fact, by what was being suggested.

We heard from our civil service, the wonderful civil service in this province, who for many years have laboured under somewhat difficult circumstances, who have not had adequate raises and who have seen their numbers reduced, time and time again, to the point that they are often having very difficult problems with delivering the services that we expect of them and which the citizens of this province need.

1630

I think today we saw what their answer is going to be, with the motion by the Premier to freeze the salaries of MPPs. I do not believe that this is done in a vacuum. This is done to show the civil service that we in fact will not be getting an increase, and in all likelihood they will not as well. I think that's a very sad day for the men and women who were hoping for so much more from this government, having given sometimes their entire professional and adult lives in the service of this province.

All of these problems and many more must be addressed, but it comes down to the final conundrum that this government, that this finance minister, that this party is going to have: How do you do all the important things that need to be done when you have a revenue shortfall? How do you do that when you inherit a \$5.6-billion debt?

We heard from most of those deputants and they told you something that I don't believe you wanted to hear: If you don't have the money, you have to go out and find it.



If that means raising taxes, they told you, then go out and raise the taxes. If that means cutting back on consultants, go out and cut the consultants. If that means raising whatever other forms you need, go out and do it, but do not make additional cuts in order to balance the books. The reality is that the Liberals made 231 promises: 230 on this side that are going to cost some money and one on the other side that says, "I'm not going to raise your taxes." It seems pretty obvious to me, and at least to all of those 150 deputants, where you need to go. You can either break the 230—and you're doing a pretty good job at that, I have to tell you; you're up to about 35, as best I can count—or you can break the one. That's going to be the finance minister's statement in a couple of weeks or a month from now. We're all looking forward to where he goes.

In the immediate future we have interim supply, and we know that the workers have to be paid. We know that the bills have to be paid. We know that the programs have to be funded. We know that the budget will bring all that into perspective in four or five weeks. But I ask the government and the government members in that period to be forthright. I ask you to be honest. I ask you to think that when you promised 230 separate programs in the lead-up to the election, you consider seriously that you must, as politicians, honour them.

You cannot stand here today, I would say with all respect to the Premier, who promised the people of Victoria county that if they held a referendum and voted, he would honour that, and then tell them they're not going to do it because it costs more money. That is not the way people expect their government leaders, their elected representatives, to behave. We are asking that this party, that this government, believe in democracy. We are asking you to fulfill the promises you made to the people of Ontario. We are asking you to do what is right, not what is expedient and not what costs less. If you do what is right, we will applaud you. If you do what is wrong, if you go back on your word, then we will not. The people will judge, not only in this budget but in three or four years from now, whether or not you can be trusted again. I hope you're good for your word. We're all watching.

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I'm pleased to speak to the bill. There are some things in life that surprise you as you go through. I've sat here and listened to concerns from the official opposition about the way Premier McGuinty is dealing with the financial deficit, and that astounds me. We've fostered a lot of interesting children over the years. There was a young man once who took a brand-new bike and completely dismantled it. But as I put it together, he did not have the nerve to say, "You're not putting it together fast enough. You're not putting it back together right." He knew in his mind he'd taken the bike apart and that he had the responsibility for it, and he said to himself that he would give me the freedom to put it together.

This is the crew that took the finances of the province apart. Actually, I suspect you're relieved that you weren't

re-elected, because you made promises that you knew you couldn't keep. You gave away money in the last month of the election that you knew you couldn't deliver on.

They have also, Mr Speaker, had the nerve to say, "Well, the Liberals knew the financial situation." Listen, the previous government repeatedly said, "You know, we may be nasty to civil servants, we may have hurt schoolchildren, we may have talked derogatorily and offensively about individuals on welfare, but we're good money managers. Are we ever good money managers. We look after the finances of the province like it's our business." Maybe that's why you're there, because you didn't survive in business; I don't know. But the line that you used all the time, opposition members, was, "We're good money managers."

Well, the veil has been lifted on that one. Had we known during the election that the deficit was going to be \$5.6 billion plus other debts for children's aid societies and hospitals, you can rest assured we'd have shared that with the public. If we're guilty of anything, it was guilty of believing some of the statements that you made publicly. We won't do that again. I don't think the public will do that again either. The statements that you made—you knew better. You knew what the finances were. You knew what the revenues were.

Yes, you can balance the budget even with that deficit. It's easy to balance the budget. You simply take money away from people in hospitals, you take money away from schoolchildren, you take money away from single parents, you take money away from water testing and you take money away from nuclear plants. It's easy to balance the budget if you don't care about the effect it has on the citizens.

The previous government, now the opposition, speaks at times as if taxes are inherently wrong and spending money is fundamentally wrong; reduce the number of civil servants. Yes, we collect money, and it goes to civil servants—civil servants like firefighters and police officers and public health nurses and teachers. That's where the money goes. It doesn't go into a vacuum and disappear.

The public made it very clear last fall that they want the services. If you don't have your health, folks, you don't have anything. We watched for eight years as our hospitals were being run into the ground with financial crises to where I believe there was a period less than a year ago when some of the Toronto area hospitals were saying they were unable to meet payroll. We have seen the current Minister of Health do more for health care in the last five months than was done in the last eight years. I applaud Minister Smitherman for that.

We saw promises made. One of the great illusions presented over the past eight years was that the Premier kept all of his promises. The priority with the previous government was tax cuts to corporations, but they reached the point where even they knew that was a sham. They knew that if their employees weren't healthy, if they couldn't attract employees to a community because



there wasn't a doctor available, then they weren't going to succeed. Corporations succeed and companies succeed when they have healthy employees who enjoy what they're doing for their job. I repeatedly found, when I talked to companies considering coming to Ontario, that the question wasn't the tax rate. The number one question was, "Can I get a family doctor for the employees?"

Actually, I can't lay all the blame on the Progressive Conservative government for that one, because I believe it was the previous NDP government that slashed the number of training positions for new doctors. Now we're paying the price, because you don't crank up and turn out a new doctor in a year or two. We are still living with that legacy from what is now the third party.

When you talk about a budget, you're really talking about the program for the government; you're talking about the services that they deliver expressed in dollars. We have seen the false savings that took place. We have seen the wrong priorities happen over the previous two governments. Now we're seeing a government that is methodically saying, "If it took eight or 13 years to break, it's not going to get fixed in the first five months, folks." You did more damage in the 13 years than can be fixed in five months. You know that. It's easy to criticize from that side, but you're criticizing us for trying to deal with a situation that you created. I have a little bit of a problem with the ethics of that.

1640

Now, if we look at how the money was spent in the past—because the issue today, the issue we're debating now, is interim supply: saying the government needs some money to pay for essential services. If that is the situation and you want to criticize, let's look at how some of the spending took place in the past.

You gave away money to corporations while our hospitals absolutely suffered. There was an article in the *Toronto Star*—that's the local Tory newspaper—that condemned the condition of the schools in the Toronto area. Those schools didn't go downhill in five months, folks; those schools took 10 years, 13 years to go downhill. The challenge for us is the find the money, because the money that should have gone into fixing those schools was given away to corporations, was given in tax credits, tax benefits and reduced taxes to the people who needed it the least.

Surely, from the election last fall, in knocking on doors—if you knocked on doors, that may have been risky, because you would have had to identify yourself as a Progressive Conservative candidate, so you may have been better to do just material drops or literature drops. But supposing you knocked on the doors and identified yourself—

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** Or phone calls.

**Mr Parsons:** Or phone calls. Phone calls are good; you don't have to look people in the eye with phone calls. I never actually used phone calls; I did the knocking on doors, as I know my colleagues did. But you had to have knocked on doors of homes where you knew they were struggling, absolutely struggling. They weren't

going to benefit from any of the major tax cuts, but they were being hurt by the user fees that were insidiously being applied to lower-income and average working families, in fact.

For all of your fiscal management, it's easy to spend freely and do your tax cuts when you do it and borrow money. The Harris-Eves government borrowed \$21 billion. That number is so large it's hard to understand, I think, for the average person. They borrowed \$21 billion, which generates a cost of, I believe, \$1.6 billion a year in interest, just to service that \$21 billion.

**Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington):** What a waste of money.

**Mr Parsons:** It's a waste of money that should go into hospitals, should go into schools, should go to seniors. But no, it was done so they could give out—was it \$200 that every house got? They mailed every house \$200 because the province was so flush with cash. It turned out it was borrowed money, folks. It was borrowed money.

I can't believe, actually, some of the comments I've heard over the past hour or so when I think about the games that were played to give away other people's money, knowing that our children are going to be stuck to pay that debt back and to suffer the effects of what happened over it—government ads.

You know, one of the neatest things I heard—our government, the Dalton McGuinty government, introduced a bill to raise the minimum wage for the first time in eight years. Do you know what I heard from that side? "It's not enough." The raise wasn't enough. But this is a party that campaigned on a platform—

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** Who said that?

*Interjections.*

**Mr Parsons:** There are too many for me to run through. Excuse me; I have the floor. I know you want to listen to me, and you're proving very distracting.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr Parsons:** Thank you, Speaker.

There were statements made on that side that it was not enough. I find that unbelievable.

**Interjection:** John Baird said it.

**Mr Parsons:** No, it wasn't from that side. That side said it also. I believe it was in the front row.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Parsons:** Yes, there are witnesses. We'll check Hansard after, but I know I heard it. He said it was not enough money. He threw his hands up, even. Now we're narrowing in on the member—the one who throws up his hands a lot. Mind you—no, I won't say that; I won't go there. The criticism was that it wasn't enough when in fact there had been no increase given on it.

When our Premier stood up last fall and very quickly moved to end the waste on partisan government ads, again there was criticism. But that \$250 million—and that's an astounding amount, the \$250 million the previous government spent on ads to tell people what a great job they were doing. Here's the secret: If you do a great job, you don't have to buy ads to tell people you're



doing a great job, but if you're not doing a great job, people aren't stupid. The people of Ontario are very intelligent, and when they saw your ads, they said, "Why do they have to buy an ad to tell me the opposite of what I know?"

For someone reading the ads you mailed around on great health care, who doesn't have a family doctor or who goes to the emergency department and has a bed out in the hallway, that ad doesn't ring very well. You literally wasted money that would have better gone into health care and education.

Good money managers? Let's just say 407. You gave away 407, gave them a contract that gives them a licence to print money in many ways. Then you simply took that little quick windfall profit to help you balance the budget for that minute or that day or that year. That's shameful.

You know, I don't think the public minds spending if they get good value for it. I know they don't. The public wants to believe that tax money that is spent is being used for services they and their families require. They learned very quickly, in the latter part of last year, that that money wasn't being spent wisely. In fact, far too much of that money was being spent on friends.

I can assure you that the money that is being collected and used for this interim supply bill is going to be used where it belongs: It is being used to deliver essential services to the people of Ontario. They should be very pleased, and they can be assured that they're getting value for the dollar on the expenditures that will happen as a result of this bill, if it is passed.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to rise to give some thoughts on behalf of the folks of Erie-Lincoln with respect to the supply motion before the House, and to comment on some of the issues related to the debate before the House.

I appreciate the member's comments. I think he's taking his marching orders well from the Premier's office. There's no doubt about the strategy of this government—they complained about a negative campaign—it's a negative government. The one thing they've been consistent with in their messages is running down the opposition parties. I guess the philosophy of their attacks on the opposition parties is that they want to make sure they win the next election by default, because there's certainly no agenda to brag about in the first half year of the McGuinty government. Almost the entire content from across the floor is continued criticism.

That's a fine aspect of a debate when the only thing you really concentrate on, the only thing you've been consistent on in your messages, is going after the former Conservative government, going after the third party, trying to marginalize the role the NDP plays in this House, throwing them way into the corner, defying parliamentary tradition.

The only reason for that, I think, is that they know they have little to boast about in leadership, little to boast about in accomplishment, little to boast about in agenda in six months. So all they've got left is to run a negative government and hope to win a war of attrition.

Let's look at the record of this government in the past six months. It is hard, aside from the negative tone, to find a message they have been consistent about. Albeit their message in the campaign was to increase spending substantially in a number of areas, the reality they're communicating today is something quite the opposite. A government that campaigned on holding the line on taxes brought in the single biggest tax hike in the history of the province. They made Bob Rae look like a piker. What was the value of this increase, again?

**Mr Dunlop:** It was \$4.2 billion.

**Mr Hudak:** It was \$4.2 billion. I swear I remember the then-Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, saying, "I will not raise your taxes." The first bill, symbolic in the Legislature, was a \$4.2-billion tax hike.

To date, in fact, we've found 20 major campaign promises already broken, and that's in six months. Who knows what the list is going to be over time? Every day we're finding more campaign promises broken on a regular basis.

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Auto insurance comes to mind as well. I remember a commitment to enable the rates of my constituents to be cut by up to 20% within 90 days of taking office. Constituents continue to come to my office complaining about their increases. I think they've given up on Liberals keeping any of their key campaign promises, so they've asked us as opposition members to fight back and push for some justice on that file, among others.

April 1 will be a very interesting day as well. To my colleague from the Prince Edward county area, the Prince Edward-Hastings riding—he talked about my colleague from Nepean-Carleton on the minimum wage increase. I think if the member here complained about the minimum wage increase, it was simply to assert that you need a much bigger increase for people on minimum wage to make up for the punishing tax hikes already brought in by this government.

We had an initiative to take many low-income workers off the tax rolls altogether. That was eliminated in that \$4.2-billion tax hike bill that Dalton McGuinty brought in as his first bill. Low-income individuals will be paying higher income taxes than they would have otherwise. If they're driving, if they have the opportunity to pay for auto insurance, they're not getting the 20% rate reduction they had been promised.

We're seeing now a lifting of the hydro rates, despite another solemn campaign promise to maintain the rate cap of 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour—one of the first bills, again, to eliminate that cap. So now low-income families are not only not getting the tax breaks, they're going to be hit with higher auto insurance and they're being hit with higher hydro.

Despite the protestations when they were on this side of the House with respect to natural gas prices and consumer protection for natural gas, lo and behold, last week we learned of a punishing hit in gas rates of, I think, 10% or more impacting working families in Ontario. So come April 1, April Fool's Day, a major

impact on the budgets, on the pocketbooks of average Ontarians, let alone being a senior in Ontario.

We had legislation in place, an initiative under way to help seniors. If you're a senior on a fixed income, trying to make ends meet at the end of each and every individual month is difficult enough and it's difficult enough now that hydro rates are going up, it's difficult now that the Liberals are allowing gas price increases to go through. It's hard enough for seniors trying to drive and facing higher auto insurance premiums, but on top of that, the indignity of stripping away the seniors' property tax cut, which would have brought an average savings, I think, of between \$400 and \$500 per senior household—to some individuals, maybe that's not a lot; to a lot of seniors on fixed incomes, that's a substantial sum of money.

On top of that, despite a campaign promise—I'm tired of saying that phrase—to hold the line and actually improve the Ontario drug benefit program, now we see ideas floated at town halls across the province and in the newspaper to substantially increase fees in the Ontario drug benefit program, to take some seniors off the Ontario drug benefit program altogether, again in contrast with what was said in opposition and in contrast to what was declared in the campaign.

No wonder you're seeing so many petitions on this side of the Legislature on behalf of seniors. We launched one in my office just two weeks ago. We launched it in Black Creek Leisure Homes in Stevensville, at Portal Village in Port Colborne and in Beamsville. We'll do one in Dunnville shortly—sort of four corners of the riding. The response from seniors has been absolutely overwhelming because, faced with these increasingly burdensome attacks on their pocketbooks, to suffer the potential loss of access to drugs—if they had voted for the Liberals, if they had voted to keep the drug benefit program the same or improved, they are sorely disappointed and responding, I think, with great frustration, great cynicism and, to some extent, great anger at the initiatives of this government.

Surrounding this issue, of course, of supply and helping to support government ministries is the current standing of the finance minister with the ongoing criminal investigations by the RCMP, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and the Ontario Securities Commission into the Royal Group. The finance minister, of course, had been the chair of the audit committee and, I think, a member of the board since its founding. I would be surprised if an investigation into the Royal Group did not involve an investigation into the decisions or actions of members of the board.

We have asked the Premier time and time again, including most recently in the Legislature today, to set a high level, a high standard—this is the first issue that's arisen on his judgment about the role of his cabinet ministers—to at least keep apprised, so he would know immediately and could inform the Legislature the second those investigations go to the finance minister, his decisions on the board or his actions. He refuses to do so.

I think the ability to put this budget forward clearly and cleanly, under the cloud of the scandal currently surrounding Premier McGuinty's leadership with respect to the finance minister's standing in his cabinet, is going to be extremely difficult to actually manage to do.

There were revelations today by my colleague the member for Nepean-Carleton about an order in council approved secretly, in darkness. There was no press conference, no announcement from the leader, no indication, until detective work was done and brought forward by the member, that more exchanges had taken place, that more responsibilities were removed from the finance minister's portfolio. As the member said, what is going to be left aside from his own calculator and his own pocketbook for him to do as more and more responsibilities are stripped away? The finance minister has no purview over the TSE, the Ontario Securities Commission—

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** The Commodity Futures Advisory Board.

**Mr Hudak:** —and the Commodity Futures Advisory Board. You wonder ultimately what's not going to be stripped away from the finance minister, and the ability to put forward—

**Mr Baird:** It's an incredibly shrinking ministry.

**Mr Hudak:** My colleague said, "It's an incredibly shrinking ministry," probably for a question later on this week.

The ability to have credibility in the upcoming budget or even the supply motion, given the current low level of standards the Premier has set for the conduct of his cabinet ministers, is in great jeopardy.

**Mr Baird:** But it's not convenient at this time. Sometimes ethics aren't convenient.

**Mr Hudak:** The member says that ethics sometimes aren't convenient. I remember as a minister in the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves cabinets, we had a number of ministers who upheld the highest level of integrity in stepping aside if there was any question about their conduct, their staff's conduct or conduct within a ministry until the investigation was complete. Sampson, Runciman and Wilson all returned to their cabinet portfolios. I would expect the same standard, if not higher, for the minister opposite—

**Mr Baird:** No, it's lower. It's not very convenient.

**Mr Hudak:** The member says that whether it's convenient, whether it's because of the close—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nepean-Carleton, besides heckling, isn't in his seat.

**Mr Hudak:** He's giving me good material, though, Mr Speaker.

Whether it's out of convenience, whether it's because of a close personal friendship between the two individuals, I do worry about the low standards, this ethical limbo dance that the Premier has brought forward and what it means to decisions and the integrity of the other cabinet ministers who are sitting across the table.

Those are my comments with respect to the supply motion. I know I have other colleagues who want to



address this issue. I'm pleased to bring some issues forward that I'm hearing about in the beautiful riding of Erie-Lincoln.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** I am here talking on behalf of the minister and our Ministry of Finance on interim supply. In simple terms, it's just a bill that allows the government of Ontario to pay the bills, to pay the salaries of all of Ontario's workers, the civil servants, the Ontario Provincial Police, the nurses in hospitals all across Ontario and the countless number of civil servants who are in every ministry, who deal with providing services to the people of Ontario. Some of them are very significant, as I said, in terms of the OPP officers. Then there are the very vital people who work for the Ministry of Transportation, who work providing immunization programs at the Ministry of Health, all of our public servants who work in long-term care, all of our civil servants who work in providing OHIP coverage. This also provides money that goes to all of our officials who work at providing a university education or a college education in the community colleges, keeping our water clean and potable in this province, ensuring that our lakes and rivers and our marvellous provincial parks are taken care of. These are things we take for granted; these are front-line services that Ontarians depend upon. These are front-line services that have to be improved, and we're working on improving them. As we proceed through our mandate, we're going to not only provide them with the basic resources to provide the front-line services, but I hope that we can expand some of these services, because we know the need there is for the expansion of services.

1700

We as a government know that in many ways there were about eight years of a lack of attention, we'll call it, that took place in many of our public services. If you look at our roads, if you look at our urban transit, if you look at the condition of our hospitals, if you look at the condition of our colleges, elementary schools and high schools, you'll see that there has been an erosion of the quality of the buildings and also the quality of the service to be delivered in education, in health, in public transit and right across the spectrum. It took many years for this deterioration and rot to set in, and there's no way it's going to take weeks or months to fix it. And we're going to have to fix it. There's a lot of work to be done to repair the infrastructure damage because, sad to say, in a period of economic growth which we witnessed over the last eight or 10 years, the previous government didn't take care of basics. They essentially blew an amazing opportunity to fix the infrastructure of this province. That's not to say everything they did was wrong, but they essentially didn't do the basic work of keeping track of what the needs were in our hospitals, our schools and our communities, from water filtration plants to sewage systems. Those were basic needs that weren't being met.

We have an infrastructure deficit of \$60 billion, never mind the financial deficit we hear about year to year of \$5.6 billion, which the previous government still denies.

They still think they're at the Magna auto plant in this fairytale world where numbers aren't numbers. They still think there is no deficit. Not one of them on the former government side admits that there's a deficit facing this government. They said that everything was balanced, and they kept on saying it right to the last day. We knew coming into government that there were some problems with their promises and assertions, but we never thought the depth of the infrastructure imbalance was this enormous. It's daunting.

I think the most daunting thing for our government is going to be dealing with the hydro disaster. If you talk about responsibility and not taking care of basics, if you look at the history of what went on at OPG and Hydro One, never mind the secret lucrative contracts to their friends—

**Interjection:** Untendered.

**Mr Colle:** Untendered—but just the fact that they spent billions of dollars, they spent eight years allowing one of the premier hydroelectric power systems in the west to deteriorate into a basket case. That is what we're faced with, never mind the daunting challenge we have with the fiscal deficit we face. We are going to need enormous amounts of capital to essentially stabilize our hydroelectric system. There's no easy answer, as you saw in the Manley report. There are no quick fixes. It's something that is going to take an enormous amount of commitment and sacrifice by all Ontarians to get straightened out.

The other thing that's very daunting is that, next to health care and education, the biggest portion of the tax dollars we pay out is to service a ballooning provincial debt. So with the dollars we give out as a province, in taxes collected, we have to pay for health care, which is enormous, 40-odd per cent—and education. Next comes paying interest on the debt. So through the most reasonably good years over the last decade, the previous government let the debt balloon up to about \$140 billion from the 1990s. We have been very clear in saying that—

**Interjections.**

**Mr Colle:** I know the Conservative opposition doesn't like to hear the fact that they hid this from the people of Ontario. They hid the deficit. They ballooned the debt to \$140 billion. Talk about irresponsibility. We are going to deal with that, but we can't be expected to deal with it in six or seven months. We're not going to be reckless, like the previous government in their approach of saying, "We're going to cut services across the board in health care and education, and then we're going to give tax cuts to everybody." That policy of cutting services and cutting taxes has been proven to be a dismal, utter failure.

All over the world, Ontario is now a shining example of what not to do economically as a government, that if you cut taxes irresponsibly and if you cut services, you know what the result is: one of the highest debts in the western world that we now have; an infrastructure deficit that's out of control; services that have been decimated; and our schools and hospitals, which are in worse shape than they were 10 years ago. So when you proceed on

that approach of tax cuts and service cuts, you end up in the situation we find Ontario in. They essentially ruined an opportunity to invest in basic infrastructure services, to invest in our schools and our hospitals. And the living proof is if you talk to parents who have their children in schools with deteriorating buildings, the closure of schools, the hospitals that had backed up emergency rooms, the nursing homes that didn't have enough facilities to care for our elderly. If you look at our cities, they were totally abandoned. Public transit—this was the only jurisdiction in the civilized world that didn't fund public transit.

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nepean-Carleton is not in his seat, so I'll ask him to refrain from speaking out.

**Mr Colle:** I know, Mr Speaker, they just don't want to hear the sad legacy of economic failure, debt, deficit and service cuts that is their legacy. It's a hallmark of shame. They left us with a hallmark of shame. They brought this wonderful province to its knees by their gross incompetence, secret deal-making and lack of appreciation for the social needs and the infrastructure needs of this province. That's the legacy of Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and the Conservative cabal that ran this province to the ground. That's why it's our job to not do what they did but to look ahead with new ideas, innovation, listen to people, as we have done, and make this province reach its potential for the people of Ontario and learn by the mistakes of the previous Tory cabal, which is the laughingstock of governments and pundits all over the world for what they did to this province. Shame on them. We will not repeat their mistakes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair now recognizes the member from Nepean-Carleton.

**Mr Baird:** Thank you, Speaker. I was pleased to take your advice and come over here so I could say a few words. You are always helpful in giving suggestions.

I listened with great interest to the speech by our colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence. We had a bad election campaign over here, but we had one good day during the election campaign; it was when he made a little announcement at a supermarket, or was it an open-air market?

**Mr Hudak:** There were a lot of fruits and vegetables there.

**Mr Baird:** They were selling fruits and vegetables, and some young Ontarian had come out to buy some apples and had a little run-in with the member opposite. I think that was just about the only good day we had in the campaign.

**Mr Hudak:** The best day of the campaign.

**Mr Baird:** Indeed.

*Interjection.*

1710

**Mr Baird:** Exactly, McIntosh or Granny Smith or what have you.

**Mr Hudak:** By Ontarians.

**Mr Baird:** By a concerned Ontarian, a child, a young person wanting to get involved in the political process, going to ask a question.

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** A friendly dialogue.

**Mr Baird:** A friendly dialogue, the member for Peterborough says. That's correct.

I'm pleased to have a chance to briefly—and I should say to those watching on television, stay tuned, Garfield Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North, is coming up next, so don't adjust your set.

**Mr Hudak:** Prime time.

**Mr Baird:** Prime time. He really doesn't want to go on until at least a quarter after 5, when he has a bigger viewing audience. I don't blame him.

I listened to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He talked about how important this interim supply bill is. I wondered why he always voted against interim supply and why all the Liberals didn't want to pay teachers, didn't want to pay hospitals, didn't want to pay public servants. But they seem to have changed their minds. That's what the campaign was all about: Choose change. But they changed their minds. They said they would keep the electricity cap on; they changed their minds.

Dalton McGuinty ran \$4 million worth of TV ads, looked into people's eyes on their television screens in their living rooms and promised he wouldn't raise taxes.

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** He didn't.

**Mr Baird:** I checked that. I didn't see any asterisks; I didn't see any fine print like in the pharmaceutical ads. If you were a small business person, he'd put your taxes back to 2001 levels. He said he wouldn't raise taxes.

**Mr Ramal:** We don't raise taxes. Everybody has to pay fair taxes.

**Mr Baird:** I don't believe you. I don't believe you. Dalton McGuinty could have been brave and said, like Walter Mondale or Michael Dukakis or Bill Clinton, "I'm going to raise your taxes." But he looked everyone in the face and said, "I won't raise your taxes," and he didn't, unless you were a small business person, unless you were a senior citizen, unless you were like some of the parents who send their children to the Metcalfe Christian school, some of whom are making \$35,000 or \$40,000 a year, where, in a mean-spirited and vindictive fashion, he made the tax increase retroactive.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Baird:** If I have the choice to agree with Lou Rinaldi or B'nai Brith, I'll go with B'nai Brith 10 times out of 10. If I go to the Canadian Jewish Congress, who spoke at the hearings, or to representatives of the Islamic community, who said it was nasty and mean-spirited, that's where my sympathies would lie, because raising taxes retroactively is just bad economic policy.

Dalton McGuinty didn't like my policy of focusing autism programs on young children under the age of six. He and his members vilified me and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves for not extending it to children over the age of six, and they promised they would do it. They looked in the eyes of these parents with disabled children and promised they would do it, and now they're not



keeping that promise. They're blatantly breaking faith with the public.

I talked to Norrah Whitney, who was in the gallery today. I talked to her out in the hall and she said, "I found it was easier dealing with the Conservative government, because at least they were honest." That's exactly what the mother of a disabled child said to me in the hallway: "At least with you guys, I knew where you stood and that you would give us an honest answer." I never lied to any parents of disabled children.

**Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** And you never helped them.

**Mr Baird:** I never helped them? I tell you that when I became minister there wasn't a dime being spent on preschool autism, not a single dime. We put in \$20 million in the first year and doubled it to \$40 million in the third year. And I never lied to any parents of disabled children. I never lied to parents of disabled children.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Can we cool the temperature down just a bit? I think the member from Nepean-Carleton may be using some words that are bordering on being unparliamentary. So just help me and be a little more careful, please.

**Mr Baird:** Mr Speaker, I'm here to help, and I'm pleased, as a member of Parliament, that Shelley Martel and John Baird can go anywhere in this province and say we've never lied to parents of autistic children. They may not always have liked what I had to say, but at least I was honest with them and didn't promise people things to get their votes only then not to deliver. That's the kind of action which puts politicians in low esteem in the province, when people say one thing when they're trolling for votes during an election campaign and another after they put their hand on the Bible, get the car and driver and move into the big corner office. I tell you, Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal team will not be able to make any promises in the next election campaign, because no one will believe them. No one will believe them. I look forward to that next election campaign and to see what they'll say around the province of Ontario on these issues, because the credibility is zero, nothing; no credibility.

The member for Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, will tell you that the lawyers from the Ontario government in the autism case against these parents are nastier and meaner than anyone Mike Harris ever had in a courtroom. That truth will get out. They are acting in a more vicious and more demanding way than we ever would have fought these parents of autistic children.

I will give the remaining time to my friend from Simcoe North. I know the member for Erie-Lincoln, the member for Oshawa, the member for Simcoe North as well as all the NDP members are very proud of the fact that we never lied to any parents of autistic children.

**Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh):** It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on this interim supply bill. When I arrived in the House as a rookie MPP back in late October, I had

absolutely no idea yet how government worked with regard to the paying of bills and whatnot, but it didn't take me long to find out. I did discover that it was necessary for the government to send money to municipalities, to hospitals, to school boards so that they can support those important people who deliver the programs. It's important that we pay social assistance benefits to those in need. It's also important that we pay the salaries of those dedicated members of the public service who move this province. So when I look at the interim supply bill, I have no trouble in supporting it, and supporting the Minister of Finance as he stood here today and told us how important it was. We have schools, nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, social assistance recipients, children's aid societies and the supplier of government services. Just as an example, what I need in my office, we have to pay those bills; therefore, it's important to have this interim supply bill put through.

I would like to reflect a little bit on ideas from my riding that hinge on interim supply. First of all, regarding our hospitals—and I do want to say that it was a delight on March 16 for the Minister of Health to come to my riding to lend support, and yes, the support required at the Winchester hospital to get that project moving along, to support those people in that rural part of the riding who have raised over \$13 million as their part of a \$15-million campaign. He came to the riding to say, yes, our government supports, with dollars, the next step, and that is to go to design for the addition to that hospital. I was delighted. And without interim supply, we wouldn't be able to do such things.

I was also delighted to hear the debate earlier—and there was cross-debate over here—regarding a cheque. I would like to move to the hospital situation in Cornwall, the large urban area of my riding. We did, just on January 1 this year, finally get the governance part of our hospital situation resolved, where we did bring together two acute care facilities into one governance. We do now have a new CEO and a board for the Cornwall Community Hospital. However, I remember that last year, before the election, even before it was determined by the people of Ontario that they wanted a Liberal government in place, when the former Minister of Health came to the riding and informed those people who had gathered at the former Hôtel Dieu site that the cheque was in his back pocket with regard to funding the hospital restructuring in Cornwall.

**1720**

Well, that cheque wasn't in the back pocket, and I am still working with the Minister of Finance to move this project along so that, hopefully, by September 2005 we will be able to have the shovels in the ground to add to a facility that we will be renovating. Yes, we will be renovating that old hospital site built in the 1950s, but we will also be adding some very critical infrastructure to the former Hôtel Dieu site, which is now going to be the acute care of the Cornwall Community Hospital. I'm delighted about that. But to say that the cheque was in the pocket—now, I'm talking about interim supply. If that

cheque was in the pocket, that should have been produced, and it wasn't.

They were talking about when you have prime time. I guess this is prime time. But I'm speaking to those people who have worked so hard in my riding in the rural area to raise the funds, in my urban area now, where they're going to go out on a fundraising campaign to raise their share of the funds for this hospital project.

There are other issues in the riding too. I look at schools. I retired from education in 2000 and had a couple of years to reflect on my time, my 32½ years in the school system. I do know the situation and the conditions the schools were in, late in my career. I know, with a wife who was in health care, the situations of hospitals. I was there. I know what the situations were like in the municipality; I was the reeve for the township of South Stormont and, previous to that, the township of Cornwall. I know what the former Tory government did. We had massive loads to absorb in municipalities with regard to the downloading of responsibilities.

In schools, we were crying for textbooks. We were crying to get rid of those portables. We were so interested in providing the best for our students. I would like to say, yes, we will move on. We're having a tough time right now, but we will move on and we will provide the best for our students. The Minister of Education has already made some commitments and some announcements, very positive to our schools. In our hospitals, we will do the same.

With municipalities, just today I stood up and asked a question of the Minister of the Environment regarding the water testing in our rural areas. A great load has been put on these rural communities by the results of Walkerton and the Justice O'Connor report and by what has had to be picked up from the Tory government, the former government.

So we have to look at that. We have to see ways in which we can resolve problems—municipal, provincial. We have to work with them. As a former council member, I am willing, ready and prepared to assist our municipalities. It was a delight to be able to organize, through the minister's office, down at the Royal York a few short weeks ago, the chance for the council for North Dundas township and some other council members to meet with the minister to let her know that, yes, there are some major problems with regard to these downloaded services and the water testing.

I would also like to say that in our schools, in higher education, we have said—we have made a promise, and we will work on that promise—that we are going to look at higher education, apprenticeship programs and the needs of our community colleges. In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, the only facility of post-secondary education is St Lawrence College. I have been looking and working, and discovering that St Lawrence College in Cornwall, with their president, Volker Thomsen, have some very creative and outstanding ideas to increase attendance at their college, to

increase programs at their college and to increase the profile of their college.

Just last week, I was able to meet with the member for Etobicoke Center, my seatmate, to ask her if she would come down to my riding to meet with the CEO, Mr Pat Finucan at the college, and the president, Mr Thomsen, to look at an idea they have for alternative energy and the chance to educate in alternative energy. She gave that promise that, yes, she would come down. I'm working with her on that. There are wonderful ideas out there in our province, and we must work with our colleges. We must promote, and that is what we will do.

But, as my good friend and colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings said previously, we inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit. The honourable member did indicate that he didn't have an idea before the election, before all those promises and before we set up a platform, that there would be that deficit. As a rookie who had no idea I would be running but threw my hat in the ring, got the nomination and won the election, I certainly had no idea of the \$5.6 billion.

But I'm going to tell you we will overcome the problems associated with the \$5.6 billion. We will work diligently. We will work as a team. We will overcome that, and I can say that we will move on with our platform promises. Let it be very clear that we as Liberals, we as the government, have great, great responsibilities and great, great problems. These problems have come out time and time again in our pre-budget consultations. They certainly came out last week in the pre-budget round table that I hosted. I look forward to taking the ideas that have been presented to me, moving them to the Minister of Finance and using those ideas as we create a budget that will be an important budget for all Ontarians. We will cover hospitals, we will cover schools and we will cover agriculture.

**Mr Dunlop:** It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and make a few comments. It has been an interesting afternoon, listening to all the rhetoric in this room.

The first thing I wanted to say is that this has been a very difficult day for me as a father and a grandfather of three young girls. I want to pay tribute once again to Cecilia Zhang and her family. I had a sick feeling in the last 24 hours, when I first heard about this. I want to put that on the record, because it has been a rough day for me just thinking about that family.

I want to talk a little bit about interim supply. I do want to leave a few minutes for my colleague behind me, Laurie Scott.

I'll be supporting the interim supply bill, unlike the Liberals. I believe when we were in power, they did not support the interim supply motions. I think that our civil servants do deserve to be paid, and they obviously need the funding fairly quickly.

As I heard the comments today from the government—on Friday of this week, it will be six months that they've been in power, and six months later they're still trying to demonize the former government, trying to blame us for everything. Why don't you just get on and



do your job? You're now the government. Get on and do your job. You've had six months and nothing has been done except demonizing—not only our government, but you're going back as far as the NDP now. Let's get on and do the job.

The fact of the matter is, there are so many things that were so positive in the last eight years in particular. I'm going to mention a few just in my riding. I'm going to talk about a \$25-million addition to Georgian College. I'm going to talk about an \$80-million expansion of our hospital in Orillia—20 years it was in the making; it's under construction today. The towers are up. They're working.

1730

There are 12 schools in my riding that had additions put on them—12 rural schools. You're talking about closing schools all over the place and I hear all these horror stories that the Liberals keep talking about; my schools are in fantastic condition, most of them. I've got 12 schools that have new additions. I've got two new schools, two new Catholic schools, in Victoria Harbour and Penetanguishene. I've got a new dialysis unit going in at Penetang and Midland.

Someone picked on former minister Klees a little while ago—I think it was the member from Thornhill. He talked about some negative things Mr Klees was doing. I think about Highway 93 under construction; I think about the expansion of Atherley road out in my riding, which is a key road in moving people to the casino.

Now I hear—strictly members of the government—you're talking about adding more casinos. You're talking about adding more casinos in an already saturated market. I can't believe you would even consider doing it. That's how you would impact rural Ontario: by adding more casinos.

Our casino, Casino Rama, with a new hotel, employs 4,000 people. Do you know what? That casino is the largest employer of aboriginals in our province—in our country, in fact. This government, this new government, is talking about reviewing it, probably adding more casinos. That will hurt rural Ontario. The only casino in rural Ontario, and you may, in fact, have a negative impact on it.

Let's talk about some of these broken promises: Drive Clean. I never read about that in your platform. I looked all through the platform, all 147 pages of nothing. I looked at 147 pages; I couldn't find the words "Drive Clean" being brought up. Here we are, talking about eliminating that program. A government that talks about eliminating smog, closing down—another election promise—all the coal generation by 2007. Keep a close eye on that one; I don't think that's going to happen. They're going to get rid of it. At the same hand, they're going to hurt all these small business people by shutting down the Drive Clean program and hurting emissions control in our province. It simply doesn't make sense.

I never read anything about road tolls either. I have Highway 400 and Highway 11 running right through my riding, as they do Mr Miller's riding. Now you're talking

about putting road tolls on. I never heard Bartolucci yapping about that in the last four years. All he did was talk about getting the highway built stronger and stronger, getting more money put into roads. Now he's talking about tolling them, and he will not respond to the question. We're going to keep asking him that. All we want to know is, will there be road tolls on Highway 69 and Highway 400, or Highway 11, or will there not be? Obviously, I think there will be, and Minister Bartolucci would not respond to it the other day.

There are a number of things we can talk about. I'm going to spend a few more seconds on one item, and that's under water quality. We had three programs in our government's time under water quality: the provincial water protection fund, SuperBuild option one and SuperBuild option two—all money that went into water and sewer projects. I'm looking very, very carefully at your budget to see just how much money you're going to put into water.

For example, site 41 in my riding has had previous approvals. Now we're bringing out source protection legislation. I want to see the Minister of the Environment come forward and say that she will not grandfather those old projects, that she'll proceed with the new legislation surrounding landfill sites. What that means to me is looking at landfill sites with the new legislation, the source protection legislation, that she brags about bringing forward—not allowing the Adams Mine to go ahead, not allowing site 41 to go ahead, but actually listening to what she said in her promises and actually listening to the advisory panel.

There are lots of other things that I could talk about here today—mad cow disease. Mr Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, talked about the negative impact of mad cow disease. He said "six months," along with his buddy Martin—best friends with Mr Martin. Nothing has happened. In six months, nothing has happened. You have not opened the borders.

**Mr Colle:** A billion dollars was given. Where were you?

**Mr Dunlop:** Mr Colle, you should know what you're talking about. The first thing is to get the border open. Don't worry about handing out—the farmers don't want handouts; they want the border open so they can look after the transfer of their products.

I don't have a lot more time. I do want to take a couple of minutes and let Laurie Scott say a few words. I do appreciate the opportunity to get under their skin once again.

**Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):** Thank you to my colleague from Simcoe North.

I want to talk on a few priorities that the government has promised to address, one of them being health care—more full-time nursing positions, more doctor recruitment and more nurse practitioners. The past government had a great start in a lot of these areas. We need to do more.

I know in my area I want to commend the community doctor recruitment groups, especially in Kinmount, where they have just recruited a new doctor to their area;

also the groups of the city of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton Highlands Health Services; the hospital in Lindsay, Ross Memorial Hospital, for all their work in doctor recruitment in advancing the medical, professional and access at home with new expansions at the Ross Memorial Hospital, Minden hospital and the Haliburton hospitals.

I have a large number of seniors in my riding, and I'm going to hold up—just a slight prop—hundreds of letters I have from seniors about the Ontario drug plan and the discrimination that may come with that and the concerns they have. A lot of the seniors are on fixed incomes—low incomes—and they're not going to be able to afford the drugs. I want to make sure that the government is listening to their concerns.

I want to touch on education for a few minutes. I'm going to tell a story about a boundary dispute right now with the Simcoe County District School Board and the Trillium Lakelands District School Board in which we're hoping that the Liberals will implement the Rozanski report for increased transportation for rural areas, because we have Carden and Dalton community members whose children are going to have to be bused long distances instead of being able to go, which they've done for decades, over to Simcoe county schools, which are closer and have more of their community of interest. I want to bring up that issue. We'll be approaching, and have approached, the Minister of Education for an answer for these families. It needs to be addressed immediately so that children should have a choice. It's a sad thing when students aren't able to choose the school they want to attend and that's close to their communities.

My colleague mentioned the impact and the crisis involved with agriculture. We want to make sure that agriculture has supports. MPAC we thank for cancelling the retroactivity for the trailer parks and the cancelling of the reclassification for the maple syrup bushes. We want you to continue to work with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. I have people with hatcheries and horse farms in my riding who have approached me about the reclassifications. We hope that the government will look at that.

#### *Interjections.*

**Ms Scott:** I'm not blaming; I'm asking you to address it, that they will look at the classifications and give the agricultural community a fair break, which they need.

I've met with several municipalities. They're looking for the gas tax rebate. I want to comment that it is the 50th anniversary of the TTC. Premier Leslie Frost was the Premier at that time. He came from my riding. He took the first ride on the system.

**Mrs Sandals:** I'm very pleased to be able to speak on the motion for interim supply. It's been an interesting debate, but what we must realize is that this is the motion that allows us to transfer money to hospitals, to boards of education, to universities, colleges, family and children's services, and to pay for all those services that we have within government—in my own ministry, the Ontario Provincial Police and the correctional services. All of

these people are working very, very hard on our behalf. It is important that we manage our money wisely in that area.

One of the areas where I'm very pleased about the way we're going to manage our money is the area of services for autistic children. A number of members have commented on that. The member for Nepean-Carleton pointed out, quite correctly, that it was under his ministry that we started the IBI therapy program, the behavioural intervention therapy for preschoolers, and that was a good thing to do. But the problem is that the previous government has in fact not supplied enough IBI services for preschool children. What has happened is that because the Conservative government did not supply enough services for preschoolers, we have a waiting list of hundreds of children in this province who never receive the service at all. They get to be six years old and they're still on the waiting list. Because of the previous government's mismanagement, they never receive any service at all.

1740

What are we going to do about that? We're going to do a number of things about that. First of all we're going to make sure that there is training available so that we can have a lot more therapists trained. That will help us get at the core problem, which is providing more service to preschoolers. All the literature tells us that while IBI therapy may have some positive benefits for older children, it is shown by the research to have most effect if we can get to those children early. So by training more therapists, we will be able to service those children at a younger age, when it can be most effective.

The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford talked about therapy for school-aged children, and he made a very interesting comment. I'm not sure he realized that he made an interesting comment, but he did actually make an interesting comment. He talked about the fact that he had a constituent, and in order to have IBI therapy, that child had to be removed from class three afternoons a week. In fact, that's actually the point. One of the problems with using IBI therapy with school-aged children is that the very children who need school-age intervention the most are actually being removed from the classroom. That doesn't make sense.

We're taking a different approach. We're going to make sure that the people who work with children in the classroom—the teachers, the education consultants, the education assistants who are actually in the classroom—receive the training so they can help the children in the classroom. We don't want a model where you have to withdraw children from the classroom to provide therapy. We want a model where we can actually serve the child in the classroom, and we're going to do that.

For that and a host of other reasons, we are going to show that we can manage money much more effectively than the previous government, and with this interim supply motion we will be able to get on with the business of doing that.

I'm going to share my time with my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.



**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** I'm pleased to have a few moments to talk about the interim supply motion, a motion that ensures that government expenditures can be paid in respect of public services, those commitments made by the public service and of the public service. I think so often we spend time in this Legislature talking about the fact that we have a lot of work to do in turning the ship of government around and fixing up the fixer-upper that we inherited from the last government. But I want to spend the few minutes that I have talking about those individuals in our nursing homes, in our hospitals, in our municipalities, in our children's aid societies and in our schools who do the good work each and every day and meet the commitments of the government.

I had an opportunity over the last several weeks to do a lot of visiting in my community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I had the opportunity to visit Islington Junior and Middle School and read to a grade 3 class, and the question they asked me was, "What is government?" When I put the question back to the children, they referred to me, "Well, government is our schools, our hospitals, our public services, our libraries." The grade 3 class at Islington Junior and Middle School understood that issue.

Last week I had another opportunity to attend at schools in my ridings. I spent the day at St Leo Catholic School and Bishop Allen Academy, where I spent time in grades 2, 7, 9, 10 and 12. Again, the kids in those schools understood the issues and struggles we have to do on behalf of the province to make sure that we reinvest the funds in their education system.

With grades 9, 10 and 12, we had a very interesting opportunity to conduct a budget town hall. The budget town hall session we did with the students really exemplified a great dialogue, the fact that the students in our province understand what government is and the need for government to reinvest and put money into these public services that we need.

In response to a request from the Minister of Health that we all attend the long-term-care facilities in our ridings, I attended all four in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and I want to take a moment to recognize those that are doing caring, compassionate work in our community.

When I attended the long-term-care facilities, a lot of the individuals who are dedicated and working hard to protect and take care of those in need in our society indicated that so often all they get is criticism. From the floor of the Legislature, I'd like to acknowledge the good work and the exceptional circumstances that we found when we attended unannounced in all four long-term-care facilities in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Last, I want to talk for a few minutes about health care and the fact that health care providers in Etobicoke-Lakeshore are trying to provide innovative health care. We've got a new women's clinic coming at the Trillium

hospital, and our Stonegate and LAMP community health centres are also working hard to ensure that individuals in Etobicoke-Lakeshore are well cared for.

When I talk about why we need to pass the interim supply motion, it's important that we not lose sight of the individuals who are working hard each and every day to deliver the government services that we talk about in this Legislature. Those who are out on the front lines are pleased to have a government that truly believes in public education and public health care, ensuring that we meet the commitments and continue to fix the mess we've inherited, but most importantly, that we acknowledge the good work they do on our behalf each and every day.

**The Speaker:** Mr Sorbara has moved government motion 16. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against?

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1747 to 1757.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time.

#### Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Peterson, Tim
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Greg
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Eves, Ernie	Mossop, Jennifer F.	

**The Speaker:** All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

#### Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Hampton, Howard		

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 62; the nays are 7.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

It being 6 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1800.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	<b>Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie</b> (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	<b>Tascona, Joseph N.</b> (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	<b>Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona</b> (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga		Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Hampton, Howard (ND)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		<b>Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John</b> (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	<b>Caplan, Hon / L'hon David</b> (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London North Centre / London Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington- Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London West / -Ouest	<b>Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher</b> (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Markham	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	<b>Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve</b> (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)		<b>Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S.</b> (L)
Essex	<b>Crozier, Bruce</b> (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / -Est	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Brotten, Laurel C. (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Delaney, Bob (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	Baird, John R. (PC)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nickel Belt	Craiton, Kim (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Nipissing	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Northumberland	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Oak Ridges	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oakville	Klees, Frank (PC)
		Oshawa	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
		Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
			Patten, Richard (L)



Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa South / -Sud	<b>McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L)</b> Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh Sudbury	Brownell, Jim (L)  <b>Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L)</b> Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	<b>Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L)</b> Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thornhill Thunder Bay-Atikokan Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord Timiskaming-Cochrane	Racco, Mario G. (L) Mauro, Bill (L) Gravelle, Michael (L)  <b>Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L)</b> Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa-Orléans Ottawa-Vanier	McNeely, Phil (L) <b>Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L)</b> Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	<b>Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L)</b> Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Oxford Parkdale-High Park	Hardeman, Ernie (PC) <b>Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L)</b> Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Toronto-Danforth Trinity-Spadina Vaughan-King-Aurora	Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND) <b>Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L)</b> Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Parry Sound-Muskoka Perth-Middlesex Peterborough Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge Prince Edward-Hastings Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke Sarnia-Lambton Sault Ste Marie Scarborough Centre / -Centre Scarborough East / -Est	Miller, Norm (PC) Wilkinson, John (L) Leal, Jeff (L) Arthurs, Wayne (L) Parsons, Ernie (L) Yakabuski, John (PC) Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Oraziotti, David (L) Duguid, Brad (L) <b>Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L)</b> Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	Waterloo-Wellington  Whitby-Ajax Willowdale Windsor West / -Ouest	<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b> First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Flaherty, Jim (PC) Zimmer, David (L) <b>Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L)</b> Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest Scarborough-Agincourt	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)  <b>Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L)</b> Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	Windsor-St Clair	<b>Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L)</b> Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough-Rouge River Simcoe North / -Nord Simcoe-Grey St Catharines	<b>Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L)</b> Speaker / Président Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC) <b>Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L)</b> Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	York Centre / -Centre	<b>Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L)</b> Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
St Paul's	<b>Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L)</b> Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique	York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Munro, Julia (PC) <b>Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L)</b> Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 30 March 2004**

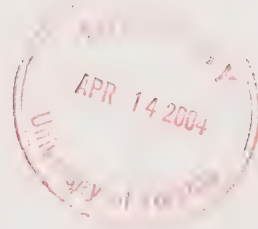
**Mardi 30 mars 2004**

Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers





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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 March 2004

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 mars 2004

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### CRIME PREVENTION

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I rise in the Legislature today to remind the McGuinty Liberals yet again of a very important promise they made during the recent election campaign. You might recognize it as promise number 53, or you may have seen it on page 23 of section 2 of your Liberal plan, entitled Growing Strong Communities. Check under the heading "Getting Tough on Crime." That's where you and leader Dalton McGuinty made the following promise: "We will put 1,000 more cops on the street."

This promise is of particular significance right now, because representatives and members of the Police Association of Ontario will be in the building later today. I'm sure they'd like to hear what the Liberals have to say about it, if and when this promise will be honoured. In fact, the PAO is holding an informal reception in the legislative dining room this evening between 5 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

When we were in office, we delivered on our promise to get 1,000 more police officers working in communities across this province. During the recent election campaign, Ernie Eves promised funding for at least another 1,000 front-line police officers. Just to be clear, that's in addition to the first 1,000 I've already mentioned. Given our track record on community safety, you can bet we would have delivered again. We would have kept our promise.

While I look forward to an announcement of money for more police officers in the upcoming budget, I'm not holding my breath. After all, Dalton McGuinty and his government, just like their Liberal cousins in Ottawa, are hard on your pocketbook but soft on crime.

#### BRAMPTON SPRING CLEANUP MONTH

**Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga):** I'm pleased to announce that April is Brampton Spring Cleanup month, and to commend Brampton city council and the citizens of Brampton for their enthusiastic support of the event. So far, more than 20,000 individuals from community groups and schools have made the commitment to clean up our city in the coming month.

Brampton Spring Cleanup is a joint venture that has seen city of Brampton community services, works and transportation departments, Tim Hortons of Brampton and the region of Peel partner to help keep Brampton clean and a beautiful place to live. These groups have all worked hard to ensure that the keep-Brampton-clean-and-green message is getting out to residents throughout the city.

As the snow gives way to reveal the ground below, and as citizens return to enjoy our province's green spaces, it is critical that we promote and encourage such initiatives in every riding. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to offer my sincere thanks, on behalf of all of Brampton's residents, to the organizers of the event and to each of the 20,000 people who have already made this important commitment to our environment. I would also like to encourage the rest of Brampton West-Mississauga to follow their lead in April and help make our parks, rivers and forests into community spaces that we can all enjoy and be proud of.

#### WATERLOO-WELLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** I'm rising this afternoon to express support for the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan and urge the provincial government to expedite the projects our municipal councils and I have identified as priorities. This action plan, which is vitally important for safety, the environment and the strength of our local economy, is visionary in its scope and will be exciting in its application.

The plan includes completion of the work identified in the corridor study of Highways 7 and 8 through Wilmot township, between Kitchener and Stratford; a new four-lane Highway 7 between Guelph and Kitchener; assistance for the county of Wellington to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge; a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus north to Mount Forest; Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative; as well as the need for a new grant program like OSTAR to help rural municipalities and other important projects.

I want to congratulate the planning, environment and transportation committee of the city of Guelph for its recent expression of conditional support for the ministry's proposed new Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. This is an important development that merits positive recognition, as the past city of Guelph council was not prepared to support the proposed new Highway 7 route and was the only area council opposing it.



However, we were disappointed to learn that the new government does not yet appreciate the importance of our new Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. In fact, according to a recent press report, our local mayors were informed by the member for Kitchener Centre that it may take until 2012 for a new Highway 7, a project that has already been discussed for some 30 years.

I say to the Minister of Transportation, we cannot wait that long. As MPP for Waterloo-Wellington, I will not sit back quietly while the government neglects our important transportation needs. It's time the new government took them seriously and began to address them.

#### VAISAKHI

**Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre):** I would like to highlight an important day for the Sikh community. April 13 marks the 305th anniversary of Vaisakhi. Vaisakhi marks the birth of the order of Khalsa, the Sikh religion. This is one of the most important festivals for this religion, which was founded over 500 years ago.

Vaisakhi began as a harvest festival in the Indian state of Punjab. However, it gained another dimension when the 10th and last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the order of Khalsa in 1699.

The Sikh religion has a worldwide following of over 200 million people and is ranked as the world's fifth-largest religion. Sikhism preaches a message of love, understanding, devotion, remembrance of God at all times, truthful living and equality of mankind. Sikhism is open to all through the teachings of its 10 gurus, which are enshrined in the Sikh holy book.

The Sikh community has become an integral part of Canadian society. The first Sikh pioneers settled in Canada over 100 years ago. Brampton has one of the largest Sikh communities in Canada. In fact, approximately 34,000 members of Ontario's Sikh community call Brampton home. To celebrate this occasion, there will be a parade in Peel region on April 18. I encourage all members of this House to join me in celebrating this rich culture and important religion.

#### LONG-TERM-CARE FACILITIES

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** Yet another broken Liberal promise, this time the Liberal promise to our folks and our grandparents living in long-term care. Foyer Richelieu Welland, a non-profit long-term-care facility that does an exemplary job of taking care of old folks, senior citizens, retirees down there in our community, especially those from the francophone community—what they're telling me is that they were counting on the promise made by the Liberals to put new money, new investment into long-term care.

The folks at Foyer Richelieu tell me that they can simply no longer afford to feed our folks and grandparents on the meagre budget of \$5.24 per person per day; that they don't have enough money to hire the nurses and personal support workers they need; that staff burnout and higher turnover rates are increasingly com-

mon; that a registered nurse at Foyer now looks after 60 residents on day and night shifts, with only two PSWs during the night shift; that only about 12% of residents with rehabilitation potential actually receive physical therapy—the other residents have physiotherapy services once every two weeks or in case of emergency; that during the evening, there are only three persons available in the Alzheimer's and dementia section at the time of meals. They have to help 12 residents eat their meals and supervise and encourage 10 others.

You see, this isn't fair to our seniors. The Liberals have failed them. The Liberals misled them to get elected, and it's now time for them to keep their promise.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Member from Niagara Centre, would you like to withdraw that unparliamentary comment?

**Mr Kormos:** Of course, Speaker. I withdraw.

1340

#### BRIAN COLLINS

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** Today, I want to pay tribute to the London chief of police, Brian Collins. Chief Collins is retiring tomorrow after 33 years on the London Police Service.

In January 1970, he immigrated to London, Ontario, from Ireland to join the London police force as an officer, and in the year 2000, Brian became chief of police during a period of uncertainty and shaken morale. He has led the force with integrity and dignity, and is an example to all Londoners of solid leadership during difficult times. Because of his leadership, the London Police Service is a strong, united and essential feature of the city of London.

Chief Collins has been an advocate of community policing and has highlighted the need for more government funding to resolve mental health issues that affect not just citizens but also the people who serve to protect them.

I congratulate Chief Brian Collins on his 33-year career, and I wish him the very best as he retires from the London Police Service.

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** I rise today to bring to your attention a very disturbing issue that I became aware of this past weekend. An article in the Ottawa Citizen indicated that filmmaker Ken Takahashi was awarded a grant from the Independent Filmmakers' Cooperative of Ottawa, which received provincial government funding through the Ontario Arts Council, to produce a film about pedophilic relationships entitled "Last Night with Jessie."

Hardly a day goes by that we don't read a story about some despicable account of sexual abuse perpetrated against children in this province. While our police officers go out each day and try to prevent these events from taking place, and bring the criminals to justice when

they do, governments give tacit approval by funding organizations that produce and promote this kind of garbage.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm the minister responsible, and in fact no such money has flowed.

**The Speaker:** That's not a point of order, really.

Do you want to continue?

**Mr Yakabuski:** I have received many calls on this subject from constituents in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke who are just sickened by the fact that their tax dollars can be used to fund something that endorses a sexual relationship between adults and children. I too am disgusted by this. I call on this government to cancel all funding to any organization or agency that supports this. Not one penny of our tax dollars should be used to encourage this type of trash. Our children are simply too precious to allow them to be treated in this fashion.

#### TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** Today is a red-letter day for public transit, for the TTC, for the people of Toronto and all the men and women who built this amazing subway 50 years ago and for the millions who ride it every day.

For the first time in history, it was wonderful to see the Prime Minister of Canada, Paul Martin, the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, and the mayor of Toronto, David Miller, signing an historic agreement to invest \$1 billion in public transit as the TTC marks its golden anniversary.

It's a welcome change to see the provincial government back funding public transit and working together with the city and the federal government in helping to improve the TTC and restore its former glory and build upon its amazing record of efficiency. This billion dollars today builds upon \$126 million that the McGuinty government already provided last fall for subway safety.

As a former TTC chairman and long-time transit advocate, I congratulate Prime Minister Martin, Premier McGuinty and Mayor Miller for signing this historic agreement that benefits not only transit but also our economy, our environment and the very air we breathe. Long live the TTC. Subway forever. Let's hear it for the TTC, subway, transit. Yes, yes.

#### TRAFFIC SIGNALS

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** Today, I'd like to take this opportunity to call upon the Minister of Transportation of the Liberal government to help me with a local issue that involves traffic signals at the intersection of Highway 89 and the entrance road to the Green Briar development and the Nottawasaga Inn in Alliston.

In June 2003, the Honourable Frank Klees, as Minister of Transportation, and I announced, along with the ministry engineers and the ministry staff at the Nottawasaga

Inn, that traffic lights would be installed. Some money was set aside. At that time the idea was to realign two side roads—the Tenth Side Road of New Tecumseth north-south with the Sixth Line of Essa—and put stop-lights there, which could create a gap so that the residents of Green Briar and the guests at the Nottawasaga Inn could get out on to the highway.

Here's the problem. Honda has over 5,400 associates or employees. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon, 2,000 cars are going east, 2,000 cars going west. People are lined up 15 to 20 cars deep trying to get out of the Nottawasaga Inn, trying to get out of Green Briar.

Green Briar consists of several hundred residents, most of whom are senior citizens. They deserve some safety on this highway. There is going to be an accident. There was a very serious two-person fatal accident last year near this location. So, I call upon you, Minister, and your government, to fix the problem that we already had plans to fix.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex):** I beg leave to present a report on pre-budget consultation 2004 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Mr Hoy presents the committee report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

**Interjection:** No.

**The Speaker:** Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr Hoy:** I want to thank all members of the committee, and I move adjournment of the debate.

**The Speaker:** Mr Hoy moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, "nay."

I think that the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

##### Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick  
Bentley, Christopher  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Bradley, James J.  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Caplan, David

Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gerretsen, John  
Gravelle, Michael  
Hoy, Pat  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Kennedy, Gerard  
Kular, Kuldeep  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff

Oraziotti, David  
Patten, Richard  
Peters, Steve  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Racco, Mario G.  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Sandals, Liz  
Smith, Monique



Chambers, Mary Anne V.  
Colle, Mike  
Craitor, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic  
Dombrowsky, Leona  
Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight

Levac, Dave  
Marsales, Judy  
Matthews, Deborah  
Mauro, Bill  
McGuinty, Dalton  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol

Smitherman, George  
Sorbara, Greg  
Takhar, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Wong, Tony C.  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

## MOTIONS

### HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Tuesday, March 30, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the motion is carried. There will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1359 to 1404.*

**The Speaker:** All those in favour, please rise and be counted.

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise.

### Nays

Arnott, Ted  
Baird, John R.  
Barrett, Toby  
Churley, Marilyn  
Dunlop, Garfield  
Eves, Ernie  
Hampton, Howard  
Hardeman, Ernie

Hudak, Tim  
Jackson, Cameron  
Klees, Frank  
Kormos, Peter  
Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley  
Miller, Norm  
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John  
Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Prue, Michael  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Yakabuski, John

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 57; the nays are 24.

**The Speaker:** The motion is carried.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PARKWAY ACT, 2004

### LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROMENADE ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to name Highway 403 the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway / Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun afin de nommer l'autoroute 403 promenade Alexander Graham Bell.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** The majority portion of Highway 403 runs from Woodstock through to Burlington. At the heart of this road is the city of Brantford. While many try to claim Alexander Graham Bell as their own, Brantford is where he spent most of his formative years. It is here that he did much of his creative work that fundamentally changed the way we work and live in our society today. He will ever be remembered as the inventor of the telephone, but what you don't know in some cases is that he was the forerunner of the iron lung, all the hydrofoils we see on the lakes today, and improving the lives of the hearing impaired. Alexander Graham Bell is an extremely great man who needs to be recognized in this province and indeed around the world.

### Ayes

Arnott, Ted  
Arthurs, Wayne  
Baird, John R.  
Barrett, Toby  
Bartolucci, Rick  
Bentley, Christopher  
Berardinetti, Lorenzo  
Bountrogianni, Marie  
Bradley, James J.  
Brotten, Laurel C.  
Brown, Michael A.  
Brownell, Jim  
Bryant, Michael  
Cansfield, Donna H.  
Caplan, David  
Chambers, Mary Anne V.  
Colle, Mike  
Craitor, Kim  
Crozier, Bruce  
Delaney, Bob  
Dhillon, Vic  
Di Cocco, Caroline  
Dombrowsky, Leona  
Duguid, Brad  
Duncan, Dwight  
Dunlop, Garfield

Eves, Ernie  
Flaherty, Jim  
Flynn, Kevin Daniel  
Fonseca, Peter  
Gerretsen, John  
Gravelle, Michael  
Hardeman, Ernie  
Hoy, Pat  
Hudak, Tim  
Jackson, Cameron  
Jeffrey, Linda  
Kennedy, Gerard  
Klees, Frank  
Kular, Kuldeep  
Kwinter, Monte  
Lalonde, Jean-Marc  
Leal, Jeff  
Levac, Dave  
Marsales, Judy  
Mauro, Bill  
McGuinty, Dalton  
McNeely, Phil  
Meilleur, Madeleine  
Miller, Norm  
Milloy, John  
Mitchell, Carol

O'Toole, John  
Oraziotti, David  
Ouellette, Jerry J.  
Patten, Richard  
Peters, Steve  
Qaadri, Shafiq  
Racco, Mario G.  
Ramal, Khalil  
Ramsay, David  
Rinaldi, Lou  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Sandals, Liz  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sorbara, Greg  
Takhar, Harinder S.  
Tascona, Joseph N.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Watson, Jim  
Wilkinson, John  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Wong, Tony C.  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Yakabuski, John

**The Speaker:** All those against, please rise and be counted.

### Nays

Churley, Marilyn  
Hampton, Howard  
Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario  
Martel, Shelley  
Murdoch, Bill

Prue, Michael

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 77; the nays are 7.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

## ROLE OF THE SPEAKER

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** I beg the indulgence of the House to allow me to address you briefly on the matter of the presiding role of the Speaker.

Let me first say that I have been getting tremendous co-operation from all members in my quest to improve decorum in this House, and I greatly appreciate it.

As a long-serving parliamentarian and a keen observer of the proceedings of this House, I have arrived at certain opinions with respect to order and decorum and effective methods of preserving it.

While the Speaker is the servant of the House, he also has the delicate responsibility of maintaining order in such a way as to facilitate the business of the House while respecting the rights of all members.

As Erskine May notes, "it is absolutely necessary that the Speaker should be invested with authority to repress disorder and to give effect promptly and decisively to the rules and orders of the House." In this regard, the Speaker has significant powers. Among these is the power to name a member. It is my view that naming is the most severe disciplinary tool at my disposal and one that should be reserved and applied as a last resort. It should be held not only by the Speaker, but by the House itself, as a profoundly serious consequence of disregard for the authority of the Chair.

It is my opinion that the Chair has exercised the naming option so frequently in recent years that its effectiveness has been eroded. In fact, at times it has become a method of demonstration, even garnering applause from members themselves. When a member is named, it should be understood that the Speaker is exercising that option only as a last resort, and that the infraction is one that is an affront not just to the Chair but to this institution as well.

1410

Naming, therefore, has its unfortunate place. But in somewhat less serious circumstances, where the firm intervention of the Speaker is nevertheless still required, I see much merit in the approach used occasionally by Speakers of this House and more frequently by Speakers of the Canadian House of Commons, as set out in Marleau and Montpetit's House of Commons Procedure and Practice as follows:

"If the Speaker has found it necessary to intervene in order to call a member to order, he or she may then choose to recognize another member, thus declining to give the floor back to the offending member. On occasion, a member who is called to order by the Speaker may not immediately comply with the Speaker's instructions; in such a case, the Speaker has given the member time to reflect on his or her position and upon the duty of the Chair, exercising in the meantime the prerogative of the Chair not to 'see' the member if he or she should rise to be recognized."

In my view, these other options, when applied judiciously, can be more effective methods by which to preserve order and decorum.

Recently, I have employed these methods in this House, and it is my intention to continue to do so. Naming will not be my first inclination when addressing instances of disorder. Instead, if members will not heed my requests, I may just move on to another member, as

the House witnessed last week. In other cases, I may simply decline to recognize the offending member.

In clarifying this matter, my purpose is to be as effective, balanced and fair as possible in my presiding role.

Finally, I want to say that in hindsight I recognize that it may have been prudent of me to formally advise you of my intent at the outset, and I will endeavour to do so in the future.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Speaker, through to you the Premier: You've stated on several occasions over the last few days that your Minister of Finance is not under investigation, even though the company he served as a director on is apparently under investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the CCRA, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. If, as you claim, your Minister of Finance is not under investigation in any way, shape or form, either as a director, exercising his responsibilities for that company, or otherwise, why would you remove from him the responsibilities he had under the Ontario Securities Commission?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I'm happy to return to this matter. I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition, and Ontarians as well, that it was out of an abundance of caution that I felt it was important to remove those particular responsibilities from the Minister of Finance. By the way, the Integrity Commissioner agreed with that approach.

**Mr Eves:** But you haven't cut to the crux of the issue. If he's under no investigation in any way, shape or form, either in his actions as a director, along with other directors or others, there would be absolutely no need to remove him from his responsibilities under the Ontario Securities Act. Then a week later, you took a further precaution, as you would put it, or unprecedented step, by removing his responsibilities for the Toronto Stock Exchange Act, the Commodity Futures Act and the Toronto Futures Exchange Act. Why would you have taken those steps, and why would you take them a week later?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Again, purely out of an abundance of caution. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that to the very best of my knowledge, no one has produced any evidence that would suggest the minister is the subject of any investigation. If the leader has information that he might care to share with this House, we'd be pleased to receive that.

**Mr Eves:** That makes absolutely no sense at all. If the Minister of Finance is not in any way, shape or form, other than his responsibilities as a director or otherwise, under any type of investigation or subject to any type of



investigation, he would not be stepping aside under the Ontario Securities Act, the Toronto Stock Exchange Act or any other act, for that matter. Isn't the reality, Premier, that for the week between February 26 and March 4, you allowed the Minister of Finance to continue to exercise his responsibilities under those three acts even though he was in a potential conflict position?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I say to the Leader of the Opposition, he can't have it both ways. He can't, on the one hand, claim that the minister was at one time in a position of conflict, and now tell us that I should not remove him from those responsibilities. I have acted appropriately in the circumstances that have been agreed to by the Integrity Commissioner. There is no evidence of any kind that the minister is under any kind of investigation. What we have done is the right thing.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** New question, the member from Nepean-Carleton.

**Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton):** Premier, I don't think you understand just how important this is. It's about the ethical standards that you enforce on your cabinet and on your administration.

On February 26, your Minister of Finance invoked section 16 of the Members' Integrity Act. I'm going to read that for you so it's clear: "A member of the executive council who has reasonable grounds to believe that he or she has a conflict of interest in a matter requiring the member's decision shall ask the Premier ... to appoint another member" of cabinet to perform these duties.

If your man Sorbara is under no cloud, is under no investigation and there is no problem, why would you invoke the potential conflict of interest clauses of this act? Would you stand in your place and tell us that, Premier?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I want to remind the member opposite of a very specific finding within the Integrity Commissioner's letter of March 8, where he says, "I see no violation of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994," none whatsoever.

**Mr Baird:** Premier, in fact the reason you stripped your minister of responsibility for the OSE and then followed it up a week later, under the cover of darkness, behind closed doors, for three additional acts was that he was in a conflict of interest. What you won't acknowledge is that he had been in a conflict of interest for 66 days.

Dozens of newspapers around the province of Ontario have come to similar conclusions. He kept you in the dark for five months, and as Premier that should be unacceptable. It would have been unacceptable to Bill Davis, to Frank Miller, to David Peterson, to Bob Rae, to Mike Harris and to Ernie Eves, and it should be unacceptable to you. What you're doing, Premier, is lowering ethical standards.

Can you stand in your place and tell the people of Ontario, without reservation, that your Minister of Finance is not under investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police—a criminal probe—and that his actions are not subject to an investigation at the OSE or by

Revenue Canada? Can you stand in your place and, without reservation, confirm to this House that he is not under investigation?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** For the life of me, I can't understand how the member opposite can talk about standards of integrity in government when what weighs heavily when it comes to the absence of responsibility would be Hydro One and OPG and his government's failure to bring transparency, credibility and integrity to the dealings of that particular institution.

I say to the member opposite again—I'll quote again from the letter from the Integrity Commissioner: "I see no violation of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994.... I do not think that you were in a position of conflict as a result of not taking the remedial action you took on February 25, 2004, earlier."

**Mr Baird:** You just don't seem to get it. You've said repeatedly outside this House, and then just a few moments ago to my leader, "To the best of my knowledge, he's not under investigation." Premier, "to the best of my knowledge" doesn't cut it when you've got the corner office and when you're heading a government. You are chiefly responsible for informing your cabinet of the ethical standards that you personally impose on them as servants of the people of Ontario.

There is an option, Premier. You can ask Mr Justice Coulter Osborne to make inquiries of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the OSE and Revenue Canada, and report back to this House and tell us that on no way, shape or form are the minister or his actions part of the serious investigations going on at these three agencies. Will you stick your head in the sand, or will you come clean with the people of Ontario and commit to us that you will do that and confirm that neither your minister nor his actions are the subject of investigation? Will you do that, Premier?

1420

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** No, I will not personally, directly or indirectly contact any body that might be conducting any kind of investigation in connection with this matter.

I know that the members opposite don't want to allow the facts to get in the way of their particular story, but here are the facts: To the very best of our knowledge, the Minister of Finance is not under investigation. The province's independent Integrity Commissioner has specifically found that the minister at all times acted appropriately and never was in a conflict of interest.

Here is the final fact that I will put before the members opposite: I have every confidence in our Minister of Finance.

#### TRANSIT SERVICES

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I have a question for the Premier. Your TTC announcement today with the Prime Minister—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. I would appreciate it if you didn't do that.

**Mr Hampton:** I would suggest that this is a situation where they doth demonstrate too much, because their announcement was long on spin and short on substance.

Premier, this is your pre-election document, *Growing Strong Communities*, where you said that two cents a litre of the gas tax would go to municipalities. In Toronto, that would have meant \$200 million a year. In your announcement today, you couldn't even whisper the words "two cents a litre of the gas tax," and you didn't deliver \$200 million a year for the TTC.

*Interjections.*

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** Tell him the truth, Michael. You were there.

**The Speaker:** Order. May I ask the Minister of Health to withdraw?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** I withdraw.

**Mr Hampton:** As I said, methinks they doth protest too much, and that's the heart of the issue. You didn't deliver \$200 million; you didn't deliver two cents a litre of the gas tax; you delivered far less. Why did you break your promise, not just to Toronto but to other municipalities across the province?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to a very important announcement that was made this morning. For the first time in recorded history, the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government came together with an unprecedented plan to invest in public transit. What we have done today, all three levels—it's remarkable what you can accomplish when you actually work together. All three levels of government have come together. We've agreed to a capital investment plan that will extend over the next five years. It lends certainty and predictability to the TTC. It's going to involve the expenditure of \$1.05 billion by all three levels of government. I say to the leader of the NDP, that is nothing at all to be laughed at.

**Mr Hampton:** Premier, it's about your promise of two cents a litre of the gas tax, which comes to \$200 million a year for the TTC, which you didn't deliver today. Not only that; what you announced today is less than the Conservatives were going to contribute to the TTC. They were putting forward \$100 million a year; you're only putting forward \$70 million a year. Mike Harris, no friend of public transit, was prepared to invest more than you are investing. Premier, can you tell us why Mike Harris was even more committed to public transit than you are?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I could say that the mayor of Toronto, David Miller, was most appreciative of this step forward. I have made it clear to the mayor, to the people of Toronto and to people throughout the province that this is not our first investment in public transit and it is not our last investment in public transit. We very much look forward to delivering on our two cents of the gas tax when it comes to investment in public transit in Ontario.

**The Speaker:** New question.

**Mr Hampton:** To the Premier, it's not just Toronto. Yesterday, there was an historic meeting. The mayor of Toronto, the mayor of all the GTA municipalities and the mayor of Hamilton all came together and unanimously agreed to press your government to keep your promises to the municipalities.

Another example: The city of Hamilton has an \$83-million deficit. They haven't seen their two cents a litre of the gas tax, which would come to something like \$30 million. So they asked you to at least pool their social assistance costs with the neighbouring city of Burlington, which could give them about \$19 million in relief. You said no to that too.

You've broken your promise, Premier, and now you're saying no to another municipality. What happened to your promises? Did they just evaporate after the election?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I obviously disagree entirely with the leader of the NDP's interpretation of recent events. We are working as hard as we can to develop a new approach when it comes to dealing with our municipal partners. We want to work together with them, not against them. We intend to treat them with respect.

The other thing that we have done today that I am so pleased about is that instead of, as the previous government did, going out of its way to pick fight after fight with whatever other level of government they could possibly find, we encouraged, we urged, we cajoled the federal government into delivering \$350 million to the city of Toronto for public transit. That has never been done before, and we're proud of the work we did in getting that to happen.

**Mr Hampton:** Surely the Premier isn't so naive. Surely he understands there's a federal election coming and Mr Martin wants to buy his way out of a scandal. Surely you must know that. This is about your promises—your promises. You were the one who said, "Two cents a litre of the gas tax."

Hamilton should be receiving \$30 million from that. They've seen nothing. So they asked you to pool social assistance costs. You said no to that. Then they said, "Look, \$20 million of this comes from the unfair down-loading of social assistance costs onto the people of Hamilton. Would you at least pick up the social assistance cost?" You said no to that as well.

Premier, what happened to your promises? What happened to the two cents a litre of the gas tax? What happened to your promise to invest in our cities? What are the people of Hamilton supposed to do? They haven't seen the gas tax, and they're \$83 million in deficit. What's your answer?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** I'm pleased to say that one of the first meetings I had, subsequent to earning the privilege of serving Ontarians as the Premier, was with the mayor of Hamilton. I went and visited in his city hall. He told me—they told me—that they couldn't recall the last time an Ontario Premier went to their city hall to visit with the mayor. I was pleased to do that.



Notwithstanding the difficult financial circumstances in which we find ourselves as a result of the irresponsible approach by the previous government, we are determined to provide assistance and to provide a real partnership, to create a real partnership when it comes to our municipalities throughout the province. That includes delivering on two cents of the gas tax when it comes to helping municipalities invest in their public transit systems.

1430

### APPOINTMENTS PROCESS

**Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville):** My question is for the Premier. It is really going back to a question that I posed last week and that he refused to answer surrounding the appointment of a new vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. The Premier effectively pled the fifth and refused to answer the question with respect to Mr Sorbara's involvement surrounding that particular appointment.

I think that by refusing to answer whether or not the Minister of Finance or his staff participated in any way, shape or form in reaching the decision to appoint Ms Jenah, he is showing contempt for the members of this assembly and showing contempt for the people of Ontario. By refusing to answer, he is encouraging suspicion surrounding Ms Jenah's appointment. In effect, what we're talking about is the Minister of Finance participating in the appointment of a judge and jury that may sit in judgment of his activities with Royal Group Technologies. That is wrong. That is serious. The people of Ontario and the members of this assembly deserve an answer.

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I know the Chair of Management Board would like to speak to this.

**Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** I think the public expects that the government of Ontario does everything it possibly can to ensure that the securities commission is well managed. This particular individual we're talking about was among several, I gather, interviewed by a committee appointed by the securities commission. They interviewed several well-regarded individuals. In this particular case, this individual, I'm told, was selected unanimously by the securities commission's nominating committee as an individual of impeccable credentials and was referred to the government by the securities commission, strongly recommended as the vice-chair of the board. The government accepted that recommendation gladly, because this individual will serve and has served Ontario well in her role at the securities commission.

**Mr Runciman:** Mr Speaker, this is nothing short of contempt of the Legislature, in my view. This is a Premier's appointment.

**Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is alleging contempt of the Legislature with no basis whatsoever. The minister responded to the ques-

tion. To suggest there is contempt, I would suggest, is out of order.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** It is not a point of order. I don't regard it as a point of contempt.

New question.

**Mr Runciman:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Are you not allowing the government to respond?

**The Speaker:** I'm very sorry. You may complete your question.

**Mr Runciman:** Mr Speaker, this is a very serious matter. This is a Premier's appointment. The Premier, in my experience—having served, as I mentioned last week, in three cabinets—when you are talking about an appointment of this significance, would always consult with the minister responsible for that agency, board or commission.

By refusing to respond to this, the Premier is reinforcing the view that there was participation by the Minister of Finance. That is totally wrong; that is totally serious, Mr Speaker. We're talking about someone who ultimately could sit in judgment of the activities of the Minister of Finance with respect to his involvement with Royal Group Technologies. If the people of Ontario and the members of this assembly deserve the respect that the Premier suggests we should be receiving, he should stand on his feet here today and answer the question directly. Did the Minister of Finance and his staff participate in any way, shape or form with respect to the decision to appoint a new vice-chair to the securities commission?

**Hon Mr Phillips:** First, I would just repeat for the members of the Legislature, and indeed the public, that the individual we are talking about is beyond reproach, selected unanimously by the nominating committee, with 10 years of experience on the securities commission.

I remind the Legislature as well that the Integrity Commissioner examined this matter in some considerable detail, looked at the role the Minister of Finance played and concluded that the minister acted entirely properly. It would have been totally inappropriate of the minister to do anything that would in any way have disclosed that he had become inadvertently aware of an investigation in the company. It would have been a mistake of the first order, and that's what the Integrity Commissioner said.

Again I say that the individual who was appointed is an individual beyond reproach, and the Integrity Commissioner has looked at the role that the Minister of Finance played and concluded that he acted properly.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Would the minister come to order, please.

### AUTISM SERVICES

**Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe):** This question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I have been meeting with a family who have a child with autism. They told me about their problems: sleepless nights and uncertainty for the future.

You announced a plan to solve that problem. Can you clarify for us how we can solve that problem? I know that you are one of the best professionals in this province and probably in the country who deal with these issues. Can you tell us about this problem?

**Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** I want to thank the member opposite, although in a moment of madness I left that profession five years ago. But thank you for the compliment.

I did consult with world-renowned experts, and the McGuinty government is supporting children with autism from their early years right through their school years. We're spending an additional \$40 million in new funding per year to assist these children. Our plan doubles our spending to serve the 8,000 children across the province diagnosed with autism. We will be supporting the approximately 1,500 autistic children under six with \$50 million every year—\$10 million in new funding—and we will be supporting the approximately 6,500 children over the age of six with ABA supports in the classroom.

**Mr Ramal:** Minister, another concern, as you know, is that after the age of six, the children will go to school. I know you're not seeking political gain but are looking to serve those children. What's your plan to look after the kids when they go to school after age six?

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** I'm pleased to announce that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Education have a joint working group that will determine how ABA supports will be provided in the classroom.

**Interjection:** IBI.

**Hon Mrs Bountrogianni:** We will train teachers, we will train education assistants and we will train parents for children over six in the classroom at a cost of \$30 million per year. We will also train 200 new therapists per year at the college level, increasing not only the quantity of therapists but the quality of therapists.

At present, IBI training is two weeks. It's not a regulated profession in Canada yet. It doesn't even have the credentials that the American system has. Until they reach that level of accountability, we believe they need more education as well as more support. We will also evaluate our program to see if this type of therapy and this type of programming could be generalized to other special-needs children.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** My question to the Premier is in regard to the ongoing criminal investigation into Royal Group Technologies and the role of the finance minister.

I want to point out a few facts from the business newspapers. During the 66-day, self-imposed, self-determined blackout period, Royal Group Technologies shares continued to trade. At that time, their value increased substantially. When the information of the criminal

investigation became public, the share value plummeted immediately by at least 20%. During this blackout period, insiders knew the investigation was coming. New investors and outsiders did not know that was coming. Investors, whether they're seniors or working families, didn't know what was happening, and they have suffered losses in the markets as a result.

**1440**

The integrity of the role of the finance minister is paramount to maintaining the integrity of our financial markets—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Question?

**Mr Hudak:** Will you do the right thing and ask the finance minister to step aside until we know the facts, until the full investigation is complete?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** Nobody put it better than the Integrity Commissioner himself when he addressed the specific issue of the finance minister's unwillingness to disclose what could be claimed to be insider information. He said: "Put bluntly, it would have been manifestly wrong for you to involve yourself or your ministry in any aspect of the OSC's investigation of Royal, or in any OSC investigation. If particular it would have been wrong for you to have taken it upon yourself to disclose, or to cause the disclosure of the OSC/Royal investigation."

**Mr Hudak:** Further facts: On December 22, OSC ordered the Royal Group to disclose the investigation. It was forthcoming. Two days later, the TSX ordered the opposite. We don't know who said what to whom. We don't know why there was a conflict between those two agencies.

Premier, this is about leadership. It's about the standards you set for your cabinet ministers. In June 2003, you said to our then-Premier: "You cannot fob this matter over to the Integrity Commissioner. It's about you, your judgment and your standards." At what point in time are you, as Premier, going to exercise some leadership, at least some modicum of leadership, and tell your caucus and cabinet ministers that in your government there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong?

When are you going to walk the talk with the words you used on the opposition side? When are you going to set high standards and do the right thing for the markets, do the right thing for the Legislature and have this finance minister step aside until this matter is fully resolved?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** Just to remind the member opposite of the order of these events, I first made the decision, after careful consideration, that Minister Sorbara had acted responsibly. Subsequent to that, as a result of a letter sent by the Minister of Finance to the Integrity Commissioner, the Integrity Commissioner ruled that the Minister of Finance—he also happened, coincidentally, to rule that he acted responsibly. I think that what has been done in all of the circumstances is the right thing, and I continue to believe that to this very day.



## GOVERNMENT FUNDING

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** My question is for the Minister of Culture. The Ottawa Citizen carried a story that caused me and many people very much troubling concern. It says that the Independent Filmmakers' Co-operative of Ottawa is considering funding a pedophilia movie. The film depicts a sexual relationship between an adult and a child. Minister, can you tell me specifically if this film will be receiving any money from the government of Ontario?

**Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I thank the member from Brant for asking this very important question. I am uncomfortable with government funding for any film that depicts a sexual relationship between an adult and a child, and I am pleased to report to this House that this morning the board of the Independent Filmmakers Cooperative refused the filmmaker's request for a funding grant. Let me repeat: The filmmaker's request for funding was denied.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Supplementary?

**Mr Levac:** Speaker, I'm extremely satisfied with that answer, and I know that we all are, so there will be no supplementary question.

## LAND DEVELOPMENT

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** My question is for the Premier. Before the election, you promised to protect forever green space that surrounds our cities, but some of that green space is already turning into brown space. You already broke your promise to stop development on the Oak Ridges moraine, and now, as I pointed out yesterday, your government is turning 620 hectares of land on the Niagara Escarpment near the town of Blue Mountain over to the Castle Glen development corporation. Instead of protecting green space, you are sanctioning the construction of 1,600 new residential units, 300 retail units and three golf courses. Why are you breaking this promise?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Minister of Natural Resources would like to speak to this.

**Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):** As the member knows, in 1975 it was the Bill Davis government that brought forward an agreement with all the stakeholders in Ontario that there should be a special management system for the Niagara Escarpment. At that time, there were certain projects that were grandfathered into the planning act of the Niagara Escarpment, and the one you mentioned today is one of those.

**Ms Churley:** No, it is not. This development, in fact—your big-picture mapping shows the Castle Glen property as a top priority of your government's environmental protection. This is a very serious matter. This development will be a year-round urban area built in a UNESCO world heritage site. Since coming under provincial protection in 1975, there has been no new year-

round urban development built on the escarpment under any government of any stripe.

There is a remedy. Don't throw it off to the Ontario Municipal Board. We know it's going there, but because the previous members of the commission approved it, they'll probably let it go ahead. You can bring in a minister's zoning order to stop it now, as the previous government did for Oak Ridges moraine areas in Richmond Hill. You can do that today to stop this development. Will you do that? It is a disgrace if you don't.

**Hon Mr Ramsay:** As the member probably knows, I do not have the power to bring in a zoning order. That is the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. As the member stated, this particular project is before the Ontario Municipal Board at this moment. That is the process that should be followed.

## TRANSIT SERVICES

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** My question is to the Premier. Today, with great fanfare, you announced what will prove to be a \$475-million cut to the TTC. There is good reason that the mayor—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order.

**Mr Klees:** There is good reason that the mayor of Toronto referred to this announcement as a down payment. He referred to that quite sheepishly, because he knows your record of keeping promises, or breaking them.

Can you tell us how you convinced the mayor and Howard Moscoe to cut a cake in celebration of a \$475-million cut to the TTC?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I will tell you why the municipal council, the mayor and Howard Moscoe, are celebrating today: not only because of the 50th anniversary of the subway system, which is a remarkable achievement for the city and indeed our province, but because they have a government at Queen's Park which is determined to work hand in hand with them to increase the strength, the vitality of this city by beginning with its public transit system.

**Mr Klees:** The Premier should have checked with his Minister of Transportation, who I notice wasn't involved in the announcement, the numbers for last year: \$64 million for safety improvements; \$62.3 million for OTRP; \$20.4 million for the GTIP program; and \$19 million for the Union Station platform expansion. That amounts to \$165 million to the TTC last year.

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What was announced today is \$70 million. That is a significant cut—\$475 million over five years in cuts to funding for the TTC. The previous government had committed \$3.25 billion to transit funding, all of which was flowing according to schedule.

Can the minister tell us today how he can justify repackaging an announcement that effectively is in a

larger box but amounts to a \$475-million cut to the TTC in this city?

**Hon Mr McGuinty:** To suggest that the Mike Harris government was a friend of public transit in Ontario is like saying that Colonel Sanders only had the best interests of chickens at heart. We are pleased to be able to work with the TTC and other public transit services around the province as we try as hard as we can to make up for so many years that were lost during the previous government.

### FOOD SAFETY

**Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Notwithstanding any references to chickens, I want to ask you a question. Last Saturday, I was pleased to meet with about 20 representatives of the Perth County Federation of Agriculture, who meet with me every year to brief me on issues of provincial concern. As you know, agriculture is the largest industry in my riding of Perth-Middlesex. Food safety is the pre-eminent priority for farmers and my constituents, not only for their families' sake but for the sake of our economy. As the second-largest industry in this province, we depend not only on the safety of food but on the perception of the safety of food. Given this, what action is your ministry taking to address the safety and quality of food in this province?

**Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Our goal is to ensure that we have the safest food in the province. We want to have a safe, seamless system that is going to ensure that food is safe from the farm gate to your plate. That is our goal. That's why we moved to hire full-time meat inspectors. We're in the process right now of completing that and doing away with contract meat inspection like the previous government put forward. That's why we've moved forward with increased water testing at abattoirs in this province, to ensure that we have up-to-date tests. That's why this government is committed to an independent review of the meat system, not only from the abattoir system but also for further food processing. We're looking very much forward to Justice Haines's report, and we are going to move forward.

In 2001, with a lot of fanfare, the previous government talked about the Food Safety and Quality Act but did nothing. They neglected food safety and quality in this province and sat on that report. We're moving forward, because we're going to ensure that we have the safest food in this province.

**Mr Wilkinson:** As the farmers in my riding know, food safety is imperative in every step of the process. I heard from the processors in my riding discussing the new hazard analysis critical control point system known as HACCP. It provides advantages for both small and medium-sized processors. Can you tell the farmers in my riding how this program will benefit the products that they are so proud to produce?

**Hon Mr Peters:** HACCP was designed in the 1960s by the space industry to ensure that we had the safest

food at the processing level. HACCP, though, has been very much based toward large processors. Our goal is to work with medium-sized and small processors—there are over 700 in Ontario—to bring that skill and technology right down to the ground level. We need to ensure consumer confidence, because consumer confidence benefits everybody. That way we know that the food we eat on a daily basis is safe. Consumer confidence benefits the farming community to a great degree. We need to ensure that we have the safest food, and that's why we've introduced the HACCP advantage. We had over 500 food processors attend the launch of the HACCP advantage conference. This is a program that is going to benefit the agricultural community for many years to come.

### HIGHWAY 69

**Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka):** My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. During the election campaign your government stated that there would be no tolls placed on highways that don't have alternate routes. Minister, what is the alternate route for people travelling from Parry Sound to Sudbury on Highway 69?

**Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** I want to reinforce that while the criteria are being developed for tolls on highways, I am very, very confident that the unique concerns of the north, the unique challenges of the north and the uniqueness of the northern Ontario highways is being considered.

**Mr Miller:** Minister, recently while in Sudbury, the Premier stated that he is considering tolls on Highway 69. Both of us know how devastating tolling Highway 69 would be to the northern economy. This highway is a vital link to the north that our businesses and communities rely on. You yourself have campaigned vigorously in the past when you were in the opposition for strengthening this link. However, now you seem not to be able to say whether Highway 69 is going to be a toll highway or is not going to be a toll highway. I therefore want to ask you, on behalf of all those in the north and in your riding, who promised a freeway—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order.

Would you put your question again, please?

**Mr Miller:** I want to ask the minister: Can he guarantee, for those in the north, that Highway 69 will be a freeway, not a toll highway?

**Hon Mr Bartolucci:** I'm very concerned that too many people on the opposition side are watching Fear Factor on Monday evenings at 8 o'clock. I would suggest to you that the only thing I will commit to is that this government will be fair to northerners, that this government listens to and understands the concerns of northerners, that this government is committed to ensuring that northern Ontario prospers.

Unlike the previous government, this government will not make announcements that they will not live up to. For



example, in November 2002, the former Premier of the province committed to \$100 million in the 2003 budget. It wasn't there. In November 2002, the former Premier suggested—no, promised—that construction from Sudbury would begin in 2003. It never happened.

### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East):** My question is for the Minister of Finance.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order. Let's just settle down a bit, please.

**Mr Fonseca:** My office, as I'm sure is the case for many of the members here, has been receiving many calls, e-mails and letters with respect to auto insurance rates. Many of my constituents are facing increases in their rates. This has placed many people in the situation of having to leave their cars on the driveway, or worse, risk driving without insurance, simply because they cannot afford the premiums.

Minister, just recently the insurance companies posted record profits of \$2.6 billion, yet they still feel the need to raise premiums. How can insurance companies make these kinds of profits when rates are increasing for drivers?

**Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance):** As Minister of Finance, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on profits of any company, public or private, but I want to say—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** It's a cacophony over there.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Many members have expressed a concern that they won't be able to hear the answer or their questions put forward; question period will end. So if we allow the minister to respond, maybe you'll get your question on.

Minister?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** I support that, sir. Let me just say, though, that those profits create the perfect economic environment for this government to realize the very first steps that it took as a government, bringing in regulation and then a piece of legislation to lower insurance rates in this province by an average of 10%. We took that action on the very first day.

1500

Ninety days later, all auto insurance companies were required to refile rates. By mid-April this year, consumers will begin to see their auto rates go down, after three years of unprecedented rate increases while that party was in government.

**Mr Fonseca:** I'm glad to hear that your ministry and this government are listening to the concerns of Ontarians, that steps are being taken to address this situation, which was created by the inaction of the previous government. Shame on you. In other provinces, auto insurance reforms meant that benefits and injured people

were greatly reduced. Will Ontario be stripping coverage from our drivers?

**Hon Mr Sorbara:** It's a good point. The problem of rising insurance rates has plagued every jurisdiction in Canada. Ontario was not prepared to tackle the problem by way of going after benefits that individual accident victims look to. We have brought forward a measured number of initiatives to ensure, on one hand, that accident insurance premiums will go down—as I said, by the middle of next month, individual drivers should see the impact of those initiatives—but not doing it on the backs of those who have suffered damage and physical damage as a result of automobile accidents. We're very proud of that.

### AMBULANCE SERVICE

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** My suggestion to the Minister of Health: St Catharines Standard reporter Calvin Reid tells me that the thickest file on his desk is the clippings history around the Niagara ambulance dispatch centre. The last government, as you know, failed to deliver. Every Liberal candidate in the Niagara region during the course of the election campaign was promising prompt announcements of the Niagara regional ambulance dispatch centre. Well, it still hasn't been delivered.

Lives are at risk; you know that. This is a very dangerous scenario for Niagarans to have to live with. You haven't delivered either. This ain't rocket science. All the planning has been done. All the inquiries surely have been made. You sought a three-month extension. We're now two months into that three-month extension. When is the announcement going to come? The people of Niagara deserve to know.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I agree that this is an important issue to the people of Niagara, and if I didn't know that, I've got Jim Bradley and other aggressive members from Niagara who remind me of that every day, including the member—

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** And you hear from them so often.

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** Yes, I do hear from them so often, and not from you, Mr Hampton. I would say to my friend that the three-month extension ought to give you some guideline about the term we need to get this dealt with.

**Mr Kormos:** The problem is that folks in Niagara, the political leadership in Niagara, have endured postponement after postponement. You've got to understand that the confidence level, the trust level, has been significantly eroded. Will you please stand up here today and tell the folks in Niagara that you will, in fact, make an announcement about their Niagara regional ambulance dispatch centre, that it will be made before the timeline has expired—that is, before April 30—and that you will be announcing a fully funded, fully resourced Niagara ambulance dispatch service within that time frame?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** It would with be appropriate for me to say, when talking about political leadership in Niagara on that issue, that no one provided more leadership on this file than Debbie Zimmerman, the former regional chair. I'm pleased to see that she's in the gallery today. I've given her an undertaking, as I have to the member from Erie-Lincoln when he asked, that we're working with this, alongside a number of other issues in the Niagara region. As I said in my earlier answer, the timeline we've established relates very closely to the extension we requested and received from Niagara region, and we should all have news shortly.

### POLICE OFFICERS

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** My question today is for the Premier, and I don't think you need the Integrity Commissioner letter on this one. On page 23, section 2 of your election platform, Growing Strong Communities, it mentions, "We will put 1,000 more police officers on the street." How many additional police officers can we expect to be put on the streets in the spring budget?

**Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs):** I refer the question to the Minister of Community Safety.

**Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services):** We made a commitment that we would put 1,000 new police officers on the streets of Ontario. We stand by that commitment, and during this mandate we will deliver those numbers.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'm not sure that answer is very satisfactory to the Police Association of Ontario, who will be in the building later on today. To the minister, when we were in office, we delivered on our promise to get 1,000 more police officers working in communities across the province. You remember the statement, "Promises made, promises kept." We kept our promise of 1,000 new police officers.

I just want to know, with all the turmoil we've seen and all the task forces we've seen taking place over the last few weeks, why are you being soft on crime on this particular issue? Why can't you give us or commit to deliver 1,000 new police officers—at least some of them—in the spring budget?

**Hon Mr Kwinter:** It's quite strange that we have a member of the previous government talking about broken promises. You gave a promise to the people of Ontario that you would deliver a balanced budget. You promised that you would deliver a balanced budget. Instead, we find that you delivered a deficit of \$5.6 billion-plus, and that is what is hindering our ability to deliver those police officers today. But we will correct your mismanagement, and we will deliver those officers during our mandate.

### IDENTITY THEFT

**Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. There has been recent media coverage in the province about

identity theft, and I know that many Ontarians would be concerned about that, should they realize how serious a problem it is. Can you advise me and my constituents what the government is doing with regard to identity theft?

**Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services):** I want to thank the honourable member for Essex, because certainly in the last Parliament he was a leader in terms of dealing with identity theft issues, and I very much commend the work he did.

As the honourable member knows, identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America. The McGuinty government, just a few months after taking office, indicated that it was going to deal with this in a very systematic fashion, and we launched a program entitled Keep Your Identity Safe. We've been working with the OPP, with Phonebusters, with credit card companies and other retail operations to ensure that information is available so that when someone's identity is stolen, they have a way to gain it back. I want to thank the member and all the voluntary groups that have been working with my ministry to ensure that we deal with this problem in a very thoughtful and systematic fashion.

**Mr Crozier:** When a consumer is a victim of identity theft, it is often an extremely difficult time, and it takes a lot of time to repair that damage. I've heard from some of my constituents that the process can take months to communicate with various agencies and businesses involved in reclaiming one's identity. What is the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services doing to ensure that Ontarians are not subjected to unnecessary hassles when they become victims of identity theft?

**Hon Mr Watson:** The honourable member from Essex is quite correct. When an individual's identity is stolen, time is of the essence. In many instances, we end up having to fill out many different forms to reach the various credit card companies, banks and other financial organizations.

I'm pleased to report that our ministry has developed what we call an identity theft statement, which in essence is one-stop shopping. An individual who has been a victim of identity theft can simply fill out the form and use one form that's available on the ministry Web site, which is [www.cbs.gov.on.ca](http://www.cbs.gov.on.ca). By filling out that one form, individuals can use that form, which is accepted at a number of retail organizations, financial institutions and credit reporting organizations.

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### HEALTH CARE REFORM

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** My question is for the Minister of Health. As the minister well knows, there continues to be a tremendous amount of concern about the sweeping powers that are given to the minister under Bill 8. The question I have for the minister is very, very simple: If you indeed understand the Public Hospitals Act, why do you feel that you need the sweeping powers contained in Bill 8, which are



unprecedented, when you have the same power by using the Public Hospitals Act?

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** When Roy Romanow did his work on behalf of Canadians, he said that the Canada Health Act and medicare needed to be transformed, with accountability added as a significant sixth principle. Bill 8 seeks to add accountability to our health care system. The former minister well knows that the powers under the Public Hospitals Act that she refers to give me, the Minister of Health, the power, if supported by cabinet, to remove a CEO from their position. The powers that are anticipated in Bill 8, and that I recommend to this House for consideration and support, simply provide an opportunity: If a hospital and a hospital CEO fail to live up to a negotiated accountability agreement, the Minister of Health reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to seek a minor adjustment in their salary. These are hospital administrators, whom we value deeply; they play a great role. But across the breadth of that former government's record, they removed a bunch of them. That's not what I'm seeking.

**Mrs Witmer:** The minister knows full well that he has similar powers under the Public Hospitals Act. This is simply a power grab on behalf of the minister. I would say to the minister, you talk about accountability. There is no mutual accountability in this act. There is no accountability on the part of the government. There is no commitment on the part of the government to publicly report on wait times. Why is there no public accountability on behalf of the government to the people in this province?

**Hon Mr Smitherman:** To the former minister, how is it possible that new powers can be sweeping if I already have them? Maybe you could take another question tomorrow and explain that to me, because that is exactly what you said.

On the matter of accountability, I'm enormously proud to say that for the first time, envisioned in Bill 8, is the opportunity for all Ontarians, through the mechanism of the Ontario Health Quality Council, to be provided, on an annual basis, with a report across a broad range of indicators that talk about how our health care system is performing and that goes one step further: It talks about how Ontarians are doing from the standpoint of their health, with measures such as obesity, rates of activity and rates of smoking.

Accountability is a two-way street, and as a government we're very pleased to say that once and for all Ontarians will have the opportunity—

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Thank you.

#### VISITORS

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With your indulgence, I would like to draw your attention to the members' gallery and introduce Mayor Ed Jacyno and Councillor Shirley White from the great city at the centre of my riding, Pembroke.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order.

#### PETITIONS

##### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government was elected after promising in their election platform that they were committed to improving the Ontario drug benefit program for seniors but are now considering delisting drugs and imposing user fees on seniors; and

"Whereas prescription drugs are not covered under the Canada Health Act unless dispensed in a hospital; and

"Whereas the federal Liberal government refuses to acknowledge this as a necessary health service despite the Romanow report's strong support for a national drug program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately and unequivocally commit to end plans for the delisting of drugs for coverage under the Ontario drug benefit program;

"To immediately commit to ending plans to implement higher user fees for seniors and to improve the Ontario drug benefit plan so they can obtain necessary medications; and

"To instruct Premier Dalton McGuinty to demand more health care funding from Ottawa instead of demanding more" health care "funding from seniors."

This petition has my support.

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Could I have a little quiet, please, while the petitions are being read? Could all those who are having meetings or discussions have them outside?

##### IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

**Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls):** I'm pleased to present the following petition on behalf of my riding:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and

technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I'm pleased to submit that, and I have attached my signature to this petition.

#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On behalf of the constituents of Durham—specifically, Shirley Cruickshank—I present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's seniors have worked long and hard to build the outstanding quality of life achieved in our province; and

"Whereas seniors' drug benefits enable older persons to live healthier lives and avoid more extensive care in hospitals and nursing homes; and

"Whereas, in addition to their taxes, many seniors already contribute toward their prescription drugs through deductibles and dispensing fees; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed pensions already face higher costs through property taxes and" the current "electricity charges;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not eliminate or reduce the provincial drug benefits provided to seniors."

I'm pleased to allow page Sarah, from Essex, to carry this to the table on my behalf.

#### SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I heard the Minister of Northern Development and Mines say his government is going to keep its promises, so I hope he's going to keep this one, since he made it to our community. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly and reads as follows:

"I agree it's time. Our community can't afford to pay more for the construction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital. We have already done more than our fair share. The Liberal government should immediately pay 85% of the cost of construction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital," just like the Minister of Northern Development and Mines promised. "The time for action is now."

I agree with the petitioners, and I've affixed my signature.

#### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Canada and Ontario, draw to the attention of this House the following:

"Whereas the Canadian beef, cattle, dairy, goat and sheep industries are in a state of crisis due to the BSE problem;

"Whereas the aid package to the industry is inadequate as it does not deal with the extremely low prices, nor the imminent collapse of key sectors of the rural economic community;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Canada and Ontario, urge the federal government" and provincial government "to work with their counterparts in the United States of America, to reopen the border to Canadian cattle now and to develop a long-term solution—an economic relief package—that is fair and recognizes the essential nature of these industries to Canada.

"Furthermore, we urge the provincial agriculture minister to call on the federal government to work with the province to enable this crisis to come to a timely conclusion."

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#### ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** I'm pleased to present a petition from seniors from Beamsville that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas during the election campaign the Dalton McGuinty Liberals said they would improve the Ontario drug benefit program, but now are considering delisting drugs and imposing higher user fees; and

"Whereas the Liberal government has increased costs to seniors by taking away the seniors' property tax rebate and increased the price of hydro;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their campaign promise to improve the Ontario drug benefit program and abandon their plan to delist drugs or increase seniors' drug fees."

Beneath my friends Edith MacLean and Faye Applegarth, I am pleased to affix my signature in support.

#### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland):** I have a petition here that was forwarded to me by the folks from



Campellford-Brighton Community Living in the east end of my riding, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario introduced public policy in 1973, Community Living for the Mentally Retarded in Ontario: A New Policy Focus, that recommended that people with intellectual disability be socially integrated within their local communities and with other citizens; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario recommitted itself to that public policy in 1987 and stated that Ontario will phase out institutional placements for all people with intellectual disabilities; and

"Whereas all three political parties in the province have endorsed this public policy in support of community living for people with intellectual disabilities; and

"Whereas, between the years 1973 and 2000 there were ongoing initiatives to move people out of the province's directly operated institutions, resulting in a number of these institutions being reduced from 18 to three, and the number of people who live in these from 6,675 to less than 1,100; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has made no effort since March 31, 2000, to move any people out of these institutions, and moreover it has resisted any efforts on the part of the individuals and organizations to provide these opportunities,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—it includes about 110 signatures—

"By no later than March 31, 2004, the government of Ontario will introduce a plan to provide community living opportunities for the almost 1,100 people who continue to reside in the province's institutions for people with intellectual disabilities, and close these three remaining institutions in Ontario—Huron Regional Centre, Rideau Regional Centre and Southwestern Regional Centre—and accomplish these goals within a three-year time frame, from April 1, 2004, to March 31, 2007."

I am pleased to add my signature.

#### TOBACCO TAX

**Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford):** I have a petition signed by a great number of people in the tobacco producing area of the province, of which I am proud to represent a large portion.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated that he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide tobacco products behind a curtain and support a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas history has proven that increases in tobacco taxes cause increases in the underground trade for illegal black-market tobacco whose contents are neither regulated nor inspected; and

"Whereas forcing store owners to hide their tobacco displays unduly punishes both store owners and consumers for the transition of what remains a legal product;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject tobacco tax hikes, reject a smoke-free Ontario, reject the ban on tobacco displays and protect the rights of consumers to purchase a legal, regulated product."

I will sign the petition on behalf of my constituents.

#### GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

**Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I have a petition that I agree with and have signed myself as well. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas former Premier Mike Harris received \$18,000 in consulting fees from Ontario Hydro;

"Whereas he did this consulting work less than a year after he resigned his position as Premier of Ontario;

"Whereas this contract is just another"—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling):** Order.

**Mr Berardinetti:** "Whereas this contract is just another example of the Conservative country club created by the previous government at Ontario Hydro and Ontario Power Generation;

"We, the undersigned, petition"—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I didn't realize that petitions could cause all this problem. Let the member complete his petition, please.

**Mr Berardinetti:** Mr Speaker, should I start from the beginning, or just—

**The Speaker:** Please.

**Mr Berardinetti:** "We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to order former Premier Mike Harris to pay back the taxpayers of Ontario by returning the consulting fees he received from Ontario Hydro."

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The previous speaker was giving the people of Ontario false information with respect to—

**The Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The member from Simcoe-Grey.

#### LCBO OUTLET

**Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey):** A petition regarding an LCBO agency store in the village of Baxter, in the township of Essa:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages, and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

It is signed by several hundred people in my riding, and I too affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

## LANDFILL

**Mr Dunlop:** "Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill site at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received over a period of time the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct the landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'll sign my name to that.

## TOBACCO TAX

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I also have a number of petitions against tobacco taxes and against a smoke-free Ontario, collected by downtown Toronto convenience stores at Bay and Wellesley and at Yonge and Wellesley.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has stated he will increase tobacco taxes by \$10 a carton, force store owners to hide tobacco products behind a curtain and support a smoke-free Ontario; and

"Whereas history has proven that increases in tobacco taxes cause increases in the underground trade for illegal black-market tobacco whose contents are neither regulated nor inspected; and

"Whereas forcing store owners to hide their tobacco displays unduly punishes both store owners and consumers for the transition of what remains a legal product;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reject tobacco tax hikes, reject a smoke-free Ontario, reject a ban on tobacco displays and protect the rights of consumers to purchase a legal, regulated product."

I affix my signature to this petition.

## SENIOR CITIZENS

**Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington):** I have a very short petition. It was started by Joan Faria of Hamilton, Ontario, and she has gained about a couple thousand signatures so far.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protections for our senior citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in the province of Ontario."

I have affixed my signature in support.

1530

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION  
DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

**Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors):** In my leadoff speech, I will be sharing my time with the members from Oakville and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I'm very happy to be here today on the occasion of the second reading of this bill, which I think will change the whole way we look at the greenbelt around Toronto.

Perhaps before starting with some notes that I had prepared for this occasion, I might just read to you the preamble of the bill, which I think probably explains better than any other way why this bill is necessary.

When we look at preamble to Bill 27, it states that, "The government of Ontario recognizes that in order to protect environmentally sensitive land and farmland and contain urban sprawl, there is an immediate need to study an area in the part of Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe.

"The government recognizes that clear limits must be set on development in order to protect this valuable resource as a greenbelt for the long term.



"The government recognizes that good planning for environmental and agricultural protection and sustainable development will result in economic benefits to the residents of the Golden Horseshoe area.

"The government recognizes the environmental and agricultural significance of this area and its importance as a source of food, water, natural heritage systems, green space and recreation, resulting in an enhanced quality of life.

"The government recognizes that it is important to continue to protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine and to protect a broader greenbelt area.

"Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, enacts as follows," and that contains the details of Bill 27.

That's why it's so important to deal with this legislation today, because the McGuinty government is interested in preserving much of the greenbelt area around the city of Toronto for future generations.

With the introduction of second reading of this bill today, we are one step closer to the realization of one of this government's commitments to the people of Ontario. We are one step closer to the creation of a permanent greenbelt protection area in the Golden Horseshoe. This government recognized the importance of and made a commitment to protect green space and contain sprawl.

Ontarians need green space, because it improves their quality of life, and a high quality of life is what we were elected to deliver. We intend to do just that if this bill should pass.

After eight long years of runaway sprawl under the previous government, we are taking decisive steps toward smart growth by introducing legislation that will create a permanent Golden Horseshoe greenbelt. By containing sprawl and encouraging growth management, we will enhance our quality of life and that of our children and their children. Creating a permanent greenbelt is one of the ways we can manage growth responsibly. We are changing the direction of government, and that's real, positive change.

*Applause.*

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Thank you.

Creating this greenbelt will be a challenge, though; of this we should have absolutely no doubt. But there is a way to achieve our goal, and the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act now before this House is a prudent and crucial first step.

The lands on the outer edge of the Golden Horseshoe's developed areas are the most threatened in Ontario today. Current population growth trends for the Golden Horseshoe point to a strong and consistent growth. The greenbelt study area outlined in this legislation encompasses all of the Golden Horseshoe. The communities in this area are currently experiencing the strong population growth that has been forecast. This strength is expected to continue well into the future. In 2001 the population of central Ontario, much of which is located within the Golden Horseshoe area, was 7.5 million. It is expected to

grow to over 11 million by year 2028. That means we can expect 3.5 million more people to be living in central Ontario in a little more than 25 years.

We could ask ourselves, "What's the draw to this area? Why do people come here?" Population growth in central Ontario is a reflection of the high quality of life that most of us enjoy here. It is also due to economic opportunities available to our residents. The region is attractive to those in search of jobs, including international immigrants and those migrating from across the country. Ontario is a place where people simply want to be. We welcome them and the tremendous diversity they bring, from which we all benefit in this part of the province.

Population growth can be good when managed responsibly. Growth provides more choice about where to live and work. It also generates investment, income, innovation, tax revenue and higher property values. But when growth is not properly managed or supported, quality of life is adversely affected. Poorly planned development can result in increased air and water pollution, loss of green space and agricultural land. It encourages overreliance on the private automobile, traffic congestion and inefficient infrastructure investment.

Studies show disturbing results if current trends persist for central Ontario. If your commute takes an hour today, 30 years from now it could easily be an hour and a half to two hours. That's another hour every day that a commuter won't have to spend with family, or at work or play. That's not what I and many others call a good quality of life. In another 30 years, unchecked development could consume another 1,000 added square kilometres of land. That's an area nearly twice the size of the city of Toronto. This area is home to considerable areas of prime agricultural land, and we know that we have some of the best agricultural land in North America within this area. That sacrifices Ontario's food, and that is not what we can call a high quality of life.

The population trend clearly will be a challenge to balance a wide variety of social needs. The government must guide the future development of the Golden Horseshoe to ensure it stays a healthy and prosperous region. This government will not ignore this challenge. Our government is taking critical steps to manage that growth and develop it in a responsible manner. It would be totally irresponsible for a government not to give careful consideration to the potential effects of sprawl without ensuring a plan is in place for careful, managed growth. There are many factors that need to be examined. These factors are all interrelated and will require careful consideration before we can establish a greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe. When discussing greenbelt protection, we must talk about permanent environmental protection and our watershed, especially in protecting the watershed.

Ontarians understand, and we understand, that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Together they mean a high quality of life. We must talk about the protection and sustainability of agricultural

lands. Protecting particularly sensitive areas such as the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands and making them viable over the long term must be an important consideration.

Just as an aside, today there was a news conference held here at Queen's Park, which I understand was attended by members of all three caucuses, both the government and the two opposition parties. It was held by the Grape Growers of Ontario. I will read the quote directly from their media release: "The Ontario government has committed to preserve the green spaces that enhance our quality of life and act as an antidote to urban sprawl. Ontario's growers of grapes have been practising environmental stewardship of their lands for decades. They are actively preserving these lands, but they are facing a crisis that is seriously threatening the sustainability of the entire industry, and therefore the viability of a permanent greenbelt."

1540

It is nice to get that kind of an endorsement from a group that also believes in the same goals that this government has set for itself in passing this bill.

Many of us have specific interests in the protection of culture, tourism and recreation opportunities in the region. These things must also be discussed. And last but certainly not least, providing for infrastructure, transportation and the future resource needs of this region must also be examined.

The greenbelt study area is a foundation for both our provincial and national economies.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** You have 50 minutes to go.

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** My friend from Ottawa Centre just indicated that we have 50 minutes to go on this particular bill for now. I know that we could talk for hours and hours, because this is important, not just for the people who live in this area but for all the people of Ontario.

Our economy is vital not only to Ontarians but to Canada as a whole. We must be able to move through the Golden Horseshoe to ensure our economy stays healthy.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act will allow us the time we need to discuss all of these issues. It will allow us to seek out and find the balance we need. It will also clarify provisions in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, that deal with lands already in different stages of development when the act was proclaimed. Once we have discussed and reviewed all of these factors and have worked out a coherent long-term strategy for balancing all these important interests, we have another task: We must discuss how to manage a greenbelt into the future for generations of Ontarians to come.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, provides for a time out for the Golden Horseshoe. Included in the bill is a study area to provide a framework for our discussion. The area includes Toronto; the regions of Durham, York, Peel and Halton; the city of Hamilton; the Oak Ridges moraine plan area; the Niagara tender

fruit and grape lands; and the Niagara Escarpment plan area.

The bill also includes a moratorium. The proposed moratorium would stop new urban development on key rural and agricultural lands within the greenbelt study area. This is the time out that we need to allow for that discussion and review to take place.

We need to take the time to talk. This moratorium would mean that for a year there would be no urban development on land outside urban settlement areas unless development has already been approved. Let me make it clear that this does not mean that building in the Golden Horseshoe area will stop. On the contrary, all land previously designated for urban development will remain available for urban development, subject to the normal municipal planning processes.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** I'm sure that the member from Beaches-Woodbine agrees with that concept as well. I'm sure that she would not want all of the development to stop at once in this area. We need development in the urban development areas.

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona):** The member for Toronto-Danforth—

**Ms Churley:** I just wanted to reply to the member that I'm the member—

**The Acting Speaker:** The member for Toronto-Danforth, please take your seat. Can you take your seat for a second? OK. Are you ready to speak? Now I can hear you. Speak up. Stand and speak.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm trying to hear you. You were talking while I was trying to direct you.

**Ms Churley:** I just wanted to make a point of order, Mr Speaker. I just wanted to point out to the member that I'm the member for Toronto-Danforth, not Beaches-East York.

**The Acting Speaker:** Noted.  
Minister?

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** I do apologize to the member for giving her credit for the wrong riding, but if that's the most she can come up with against this particular bill, which all Ontarians are looking forward to, then I would say she's certainly got very slim pickings there.

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** She got very excited with all the good news. Please forgive her.

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** That's right. Maybe she got too excited with all the good news about the TTC, which is also going to help contain the urban sprawl that's been taking place.

Let me continue. Again, I want to repeat that this does not mean that building in the Golden Horseshoe area will stop. On the contrary, all land previously designated for urban development will remain available for urban development subject to the normal municipal planning processes. In the greater Toronto area, the supply of urban lands will already accommodate the demand for single



detached dwellings for the next 10 to 15 years. For more intensive developments, such as apartment buildings and condominiums, the land available will accommodate demand for the next 20 years. This information is based on forecasts prepared by the province and by the municipalities in which these developments will occur. These time frames could be extended if municipalities undertake work to encourage more compact types of urban development during this process.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act creates opportunities to do just that by giving municipalities the time to promote compact urban development in their communities. In doing this, communities will encourage the preservation of green space, and land in the agricultural and rural areas would still be able to be developed for rural and agricultural uses. Normal municipal planning processes will ensure appropriate development in these areas. During this time, while we are maintaining the status quo on new urban development, we will be working on a plan for the future, a plan for permanent greenbelt protection. The proposed moratorium will protect the status quo only until the consultation phase is complete and permanent greenbelt protection is in place.

The government is committed to consulting with stakeholders and the public in the establishment of a permanent greenbelt. We have recently appointed a greenbelt task force to help us define the scope, content and function of a greenbelt. As a matter of fact, this was done about six or seven weeks ago, and the task force has been meeting on at least a once-a-week basis since then to come up with the guiding principles that it will recommend to us with respect to the greenbelt. They will work together toward sustaining and improving the overall quality of life for present and future residents. The task force will oversee stakeholder and public consultations on the scope, content and implementation of the proposed greenbelt. It will gather the information it needs this spring to formulate recommendations for action. After receiving recommendations from the task force, the government will consider the most effective way to establish and permanently protect the proposed greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe. The members of the greenbelt task force were chosen to represent a wide variety of interests and different viewpoints on greenbelt protection. Some of the interests represented are the development industry, municipal governments, environmental protection, agriculture and the aggregate industry.

The task force, as I indicated before, has been hard at work. They were asked to develop a clear and transparent process for dealing with requests relating to lands affected by the minister's zoning order that I made in December to preserve the status quo and lands that would be affected by the moratorium in the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, if passed. We need the views of these experts to be sure all of the factors we know are important are considered as we plan for the greenbelt, because we are consulting on the best way to create a greenbelt that would ensure the long-term protection of a number of different resources within the area. Natural

heritage systems, water resources and agriculture simply must be protected, but we must also provide for resource management, recreation and tourism in the Golden Horseshoe.

#### 1550

Municipal planning plays a large role in the successful protection of the greenbelt. Clear limits set on development can ensure the greenbelt is protected for a long time. Housing, for example, can be constructed in areas where services already exist and in the areas that do not put important natural resources at risk. Growth also provides the opportunity to revitalize underused lands and achieve objectives such as the redevelopment of brownfields.

In addition to maintaining green space, other benefits are also easily recognized. By focusing growth in existing built-up areas, the escalating public costs for roads, garbage pickup, policing, transit and other services in urban sprawl areas can be controlled. This can reduce pressures on the municipal tax base and the taxpayer. As I said before, through containing sprawl and encouraging growth management, we will enhance our quality of life. Creating a permanent greenbelt is one of the ways we can manage growth responsibly. We are building strong communities, and that's real, positive change.

I look forward to the debate on this particular bill. I look forward to the constructive points brought forward, particularly by the members of the opposition. We always look forward to hearing from the opposition, because any bill that comes before this House can always be improved with constructive criticism, and we look forward to that.

I now turn the floor over to the member from Oakville.

**Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville):** It certainly is a pleasure to follow my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, especially on an issue that is of great importance to my own community in Oakville. My own community was starting to understand the impacts upon it of some of the growth that has taken place in the past, around the same time. I think, that other people around Ontario were starting to take a very serious look at the environment. So today I am speaking on the occasion of second reading of the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003. That will be a permanently protected greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe that would provide real protection for the environment and is a key step in meeting the challenges of urban sprawl that face us today.

This is what we need for strong communities in the Golden Horseshoe. It is what we need to protect and improve the quality of life that the people of central Ontario enjoy today and would like to continue to enjoy. The proposed greenbelt would protect hundreds of thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland in this region in which many of us reside.

I want to tell you a little story about how growth changed my own community. Some time ago—12 to 15 years ago, I think it was—we were a community of about 100,000 people. We looked forward as a province and we



said, "At some point in the future, we are going to grow," and we were going to grow by a projected population increase that we could actually put our minds around. The town of Oakville said, "We'll be responsible here. We'll take responsibility for another 50,000."

*Interjection.*

**Mr Flynn:** Ann Mulvale agreed with us. Council was unanimous on this, as I recall. They came forward and said, "We'll take another 50,000 people in the town of Oakville." But at the time, we didn't know we were doing things the wrong way. We picked the number of people who were going to live here and then we decided how we were going to adjust the land, how we were going to change things to squeeze these people in.

I think this legislation that is forthcoming and that I am speaking to today is an example of what people want us to do, and that is to put the environment first. Where in the past we put the population first and tried to figure a way we were going to jam them on to the land, this takes a look at the land first. This takes a look at the capability. This takes a look at what the limits to urban growth in this area should be and how they should be bounded by a protected green space linking the Niagara Escarpment to the Oak Ridges moraine and beyond.

Protecting the environment used to be an issue for extremists, and I often joke about this: You could spot the environmentalists in the crowd. They'd have the hemp shirts on, they'd have the sandals, they'd have the long hair—in fact, I used to look like that myself.

**Interjection:** Oh, no. Did you eat granola bars?

**Mr Flynn:** That's right: granola bars. What I noticed when I was on council and we were dealing with the growth issues, was that people started to come forward to express concerns about the environment, but they weren't typical of any one stratum of society. They were housewives, they were working men and women and they were youngsters and seniors and librarians and tradesmen. You could not pick them out. They were normal people who were coming forward to their level of government to express dissatisfaction with the way that growth was being handled in the area. The name they applied to it was urban sprawl. People have all sorts of names for it, but they name they used was urban sprawl.

Mainstream western thinking in the past was that the air we breathe and the water we drink and the land we live on were somehow indestructible, that they would just keep coming and we could do anything we wanted with them and everything would work out just fine. These resources were used—not used properly, but I think with the best of intent—to try to make our society progress, to try to move ahead as a society in the lifestyle we enjoy, and there is nothing wrong with that.

We know that sometimes, when humankind tampers with the environment without proper forethought, the results can be disastrous. We know that far more harm has been done in this regard than good. That harm has been done not only to the environment but also to ourselves. Think about the number of smog days we have. When you think about the rise in childhood asthma

and about the allergies your children have that were just unheard of before, it makes you wonder about the air shed, what we have done to the air shed in southern Ontario and why we need the legislation that is being proposed here to start to turn this around.

We need to be aware of the needs of our environment and realize that these are our needs as well. We need clean and abundant water, we need clean air and we need biodiversity, realizing that we are only part of an intrinsically connected natural world. A clean and healthy environment is not only essential for our collective physical health, it is good for our soul. It's good for the way you feel about yourself as a community. It's good for the way you feel about yourself as a family. We need places for ourselves and for our children to enjoy and learn about nature in the outdoors. We need them where we can feel a connection to the natural environment in and around the communities in which we live.

The greater Toronto bioregion provides an environmental context for the Golden Horseshoe. The bioregion I'm talking about is bounded by the Niagara Escarpment to the west, the Oak Ridges moraine to the north, the Ganaraska River to the east and Lake Ontario to the south. It is home to scores of significant natural heritage features, a multitude of wildlife, features such as wetlands and kettle lakes, and these features are all part of the habitats of rare, sensitive and threatened animals and plants.

The province has the means, and we have the means within our grasp: the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan, for example, and the Niagara Escarpment plan. We can protect the environment in parts of the Golden Horseshoe. These plans are explicitly directed toward the protection and enhancement of these significant natural features.

The Oak Ridges moraine is an essential source of Ontario's drinking water. It needs to be protected. It provides a recharge zone for groundwater and its aquifers that provide clean drinking water for over a quarter of a million residents in central Ontario. Source protection is a critical element of our government's comprehensive strategy to protect Ontario's drinking water. Our government is moving forward quickly to protect our sources of drinking water.

The Niagara Escarpment is considered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, as a world biosphere reserve. This designation recognizes the natural features and ecological importance of the escarpment. In addition, UNESCO has also endorsed the Niagara Escarpment plan.

I was talking about Oakville before and my own personal experience with growth in an urban area as an elected official. I think back to the way we used to plan communities: Communities were built with no idea of how schools would be built, where your kids would go to school or how such simple things as ice hockey rinks would be built.

1600

People in Oakville watched as highways and streets became clogged. Homes were still built, but the transit



didn't follow. Homes were still built, but the highways weren't enlarged. Green space was eaten up, trees were felled, environmentally sensitive land was cleared and wildlife was displaced. Viable and valuable green space and forests were replaced with postage-stamp parks and little lollipop trees.

People started to wake up to that. They started to realize, "We want a government at all levels that is going to protect our environment," because it's one of the most basic needs. If you don't have a clean and healthy environment, it doesn't matter how much money you make. If you don't have a clean and healthy environment, it doesn't matter how many jobs you have. You need clean air, and you need clean water. They are the basics of our life. If we don't protect them, we put everything else, including our economy, at risk. That would be foolhardy.

We held a public process on growth in Oakville, as municipalities are supposed to do. As I recall, the first meeting drew about 10 people. Those 10 people got talking to each other, and those 10 people eventually grew into a group, which some of you may have heard of, called Oakville Green.

These people were capable of drawing a crowd far larger than any government I know. When they held a meeting, it wasn't unusual for 700 to 1,000 people to come out. I don't know exactly what I would do as a politician to get a crowd of 700 people. Presumably, if I did something bad, I'd get a crowd of 700 angry people.

These people were angry to some extent. They came out and told their government, "We've seen what you've done so far. We can live off the experience, or we can learn from the experience of areas in the greater Toronto area that have grown so far. We don't like what's happening; in fact, it scares us. What these people were telling us was, "We don't want you to go any further until you've got this figured out. Once you figure it out, we're not opposed to growth. We're not opposed to expanding our communities for jobs. We know our kids have to have somewhere to live. We know the men and women who build our homes in the residential neighbourhoods. They're our fathers, our brothers, our sisters; they're people we know. They're not bad people because they build homes."

In fact, they're great people because they provide jobs and pay taxes. Nobody was trying to stop growth. Nobody was trying to bring our economic engine to a halt. What they were trying to do was make sure that it was properly managed and that it moved ahead in a responsible manner.

As I said, these people came out to the point that at one council meeting we couldn't have the meeting; there were too many people there. Those who were there refused to leave, and we exceeded the fire regulations. I've never been at any other political event where that has happened; perhaps it has, but I've been in politics for almost 20 years now, and that was a first for me. But it showed to me how important this issue was. It also showed that municipalities that wanted to do the right

thing had no clear direction from the province at that time. They were afraid of the OMB. Many of the decisions were made in fear that the developers would drag them through a court case. They would end up in court, and taxpayers' money would be used to pay lawyers instead of being used for things that we need in our community.

*Interruption.*

**Mr Flynn:** I'm pretty sure that wasn't for me, Mr Speaker, so I'll just keep going.

**Interjection:** That was Mayor Mulvale saying you're doing a great job.

**Mr Flynn:** Apparently that was Mayor Mulvale saying I'm doing good here.

I believe in growth, as most people do. But we need the type of growth that's going to provide us the sort of community that we want our children to grow up in.

The Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the Niagara Escarpment plan provide for the protection and enhancement of significant natural features. Both of these plans supersede other provincial legislation and policies, as well as municipal official plans and municipal zoning bylaws, in the event of a conflict. This is what provides true protection in these areas.

The concept of protecting the environment is nothing new in Ontario. But we realize that the scope must be widened to provide true protection, to provide quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, seeks to clarify provisions in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. This will make this act that much more effective. But this government also realizes that we can't stop there, that we need to go farther. The proposed act identifies a study area that includes the area known as the Golden Horseshoe. Similar protections for key green spaces throughout the Golden Horseshoe are the goals we hope to achieve. It could start, and it should start, today with the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003.

There are other mechanisms we have available to us that can aid us in protecting the environment. Legislation that governs conservation authorities and lands helps to prevent alteration or destruction of natural lands and habitats on lands in their jurisdictions.

If I go back to my previous example of how we started our own planning exercise, the use of a watershed was a new idea as an approach to planning. What had happened in other areas—if you talk to some of my colleagues in Mississauga who may have had conversations with the Credit Valley Conservation Authority, we have jeopardized that watershed to the point that some parts of the Credit Valley conservation area watershed simply do not do what they were ever intended to do by nature. They're prone to flooding. The expense that's involved in trying to remediate something like that is something you want to avoid if you can. We have the ability here to start to move forward in a progressive way and use legislation that governs conservation authorities and lands, that helps to prevent alteration or destruction of natural lands, as I said, and prevent what has happened in areas where



we've had experience from ever happening in other areas, such that, should we decide to expand urban boundaries or should we decide to live within the urban boundaries, we don't impact the watershed the same way.

The Environmental Assessment Act and the Environmental Protection Act also provide for processes to ensure the protection of land when development has been approved in principle and for prohibitions of activities that will undoubtedly cause adverse effects. The Ontario Heritage Act includes protection of natural heritage, and the Endangered Species Act prevents destruction of those identified species and their habitats. The Ontario Water Resources Act protects water and regulates the discharge of harmful materials into our water.

Key lands—I have some key lands in my community. We refer to them as the ORC lands. Some people call them the north Oakville assembly lands. These are lands that were assembled by the provincial government in days gone by. Quite often, what you will see when you try to decide something—those of you who have been in local government—is say, “Well, in order to protect those lands, you have to own them.” In order to bring those lands into protection, you have to go out and acquire them in some manner or you have to get them under the subdivision approval process. We have areas in this province where we own those lands. We are the owners already. We don't have to go and acquire them. I have very specific lands in Oakville that I am trying my hardest to make sure are preserved for generations to come. The key lands that we already own are the easiest to protect. We don't have to do anything. We don't have to spend money. We don't have to do improvements. What people are saying is, “Leave it as it is. I like it the way it is. Leave some areas the way they are. Leave some areas to nature.”

Land stewardship programs already in existence encourage individuals and organizations to help protect natural heritage. All of these items exist, but truly they exist today in isolation. Some of them overlap, some of them contrast and some of them even complement each other in some instances. But what we need in the Golden Horseshoe, in my opinion and in the opinion of this government, is a coordinated approach. As the land in the Golden Horseshoe is identified as a region, any plan to protect it should be regional in scope. That's what this pause gives us: the time and the ability to define what we need to look at to provide that protection and to define what we mean by “the region.”

1610

How do we achieve this? That's the question we're being asked. The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, as my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has pointed out, would provide a time out to study our options. We could use models provided by the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan or the Niagara Escarpment plan as examples. These plans are based on natural heritage systems and compatible rural land uses. Core natural areas are identified, areas that contain the greatest number of significant natural features. Such

natural systems can provide the framework for developing legislation that protects and enhances the health, diversity, abundance and connectivity of natural heritage features and functions. A water resource system based framework could protect and, where necessary, improve or restore, as I was talking about in the Credit River example, a clean and abundant water supply and healthily functioning aquatic ecosystems.

We may also consider a system of existing public parks, open space trails and a host of amenities that are natural in their use across the greenbelt study area. These could meet a number of our greenbelt objectives. They could meet the demand that people have nowadays for environmental protection, outdoor education, recreational opportunities, tourism benefits, public access and natural heritage appreciation within the greenbelt study area. All could be achieved by taking a coordinated approach.

Why do we need the time out? I believe we need the time out because all these considerations deserve our time and the attention that previous governments simply have been unable or unwilling to give them. They deserve the time to be discussed by people who care, by people who know, by people who live in the communities that will be home to the greenbelt in whatever form it takes.

I have to tell you that I was very, very pleased to see a former colleague of mine, Mayor MacIsaac of Burlington, appointed as chair of the task force for this greenbelt, because that's somebody I respect. That's somebody who knows what we've had to face in the region of Halton, somebody who knows what it's like to be in local or regional government and have to deal with the province where the rules are not clear, where the OMB is held over your head like a hammer, and if you don't make the right decision, some big bogeyman at the OMB is going to come down there and make it for you. You simply can't do it in that manner.

In conclusion, the lands on the outer edge of the Golden Horseshoe's developed areas are the most threatened in Ontario today and yet, in my opinion, they've got the most potential. We need to protect our quality of life, and not only our quality of life; we need to protect the quality of life of our children and their children to come. We need real, positive change for green space in the Golden Horseshoe, and we need it to make our communities stronger.

I urge your support of this bill. I think it's wonderful. Communities need it and want it.

**Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** I too stand on the occasion of the second reading of the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003.

We have heard that the lands on the outer edge of the developed areas around the Golden Horseshoe are the most threatened in Ontario today. Our proposed greenbelt would protect hundreds and thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland within the Golden Horseshoe. By containing sprawl, managing growth responsibly and creating a permanent greenbelt, we will enhance the quality of life for all Ontarians.



The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, is an important first step. It provides for a time out to discuss important issues and factors that must be taken into account when creating a greenbelt. This discussion will help to ensure that key rural and agricultural lands are protected. The identification of these rural and agricultural lands and the creation of a permanent greenbelt is what we look forward to with the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003. The greenbelt consultations will guide us in our growth, because once green space is lost in intent and purpose, it is lost forever.

The member for Oakville has outlined the importance of preserving environmentally sensitive lands, and I thank him for that. But green space also includes farmland—the farmland that feeds us and allows us to remain self-sufficient in food production.

From Niagara to Northumberland, north to Haliburton and over to Georgian Bay, farmland makes up almost 45% of the area's 9.2 million acres in the proposed greenbelt. Some of the best and most productive agricultural areas lie within the Golden Horseshoe, but these same prime agricultural areas are located where the pressures for development are the greatest. Urban boundary encroachments, non-farm uses, land speculation and new residential subdivisions have, over time, consumed prime agricultural land for what is really non-agricultural use.

Ontario enjoys many benefits from the agricultural sector. In the York, Peel, Halton and Durham regions, agriculture accounted for 15,000 direct jobs and 35,000 indirect jobs in 1996. In 2001, Ontario as a whole exported more than \$7 billion of agricultural food products as well as employing more than 600,000 people.

There are other social, economic and environmental benefits that can be achieved through agriculture. In one growing season, an average hectare of corn, acting as a carbon sink, can remove 22 tonnes of carbon dioxide from the air. As well, farmland provides the linkage that wildlife needs in order to survive in urbanizing areas. Urban residents benefit from living near the source of their fresh produce, not only in terms of availability, but also in having the security of knowing where their food is coming from. Farmland, and food land, also provides buffers between urban areas and significant natural areas by creating an open landscape. Prime farmland areas contribute to the rural, agricultural and natural heritage characteristics of the greenbelt study area. And the issue of food security and the benefits of supplying our own food to an increasing population should never be underestimated.

Some of the best agricultural land in the Golden Horseshoe is in the Niagara region. Half of the Niagara region's land base is farmed. The inclusion of the all-important tender fruit and grape lands in the proposed greenbelt could serve to protect these lands for agricultural use for years to come. The tender fruit and grape lands of the Niagara region have long been regarded nationally as significant agricultural resources. The silt and sand loam that overlays the clay of the Iroquois plain, combined with the moderating effects of Lake

Ontario, Lake Erie and the Niagara Escarpment, make this the ideal area for the production of fruit and grape wines—wine grapes, I should say; the other is good too. Temperatures rarely dip below minus 18 degrees Celsius, giving this area more frost-free days than most of Ontario. Crops such as peaches, apricots, cherries, grapes and other small and specialty fruits are grown with great success in this area.

The area is also a major tourist draw, and as such it is a local and regional source of economic development. Land use planning protection for agricultural lands in the Niagara region has been generally good, but as economic development activities have brought prosperity to the region, these activities have also brought non-farm development and urbanization pressures.

#### 1620

This land and other key agricultural regions in the Golden Horseshoe must be protected. Only 5% of the total land base in Canada is classed as prime agricultural land, and half of that, 50%, is in Ontario. Of the total land base in Ontario, the prime agricultural land is only 12%. You can see that farmland is a finite resource. Once it's lost to conversion to non-farm uses, it can never be replaced. The long-term viability of agriculture requires careful management and protection from other inappropriate land uses.

The province has many options available to protect farmland. The provincial policy statement under the Planning Act provides policy direction for all planning authorities in Ontario on matters of provincial interest, including "the protection of the agricultural resources of the province." The provincial policy statement requires that prime agricultural land be protected for agriculture and agriculturally related uses, and it identifies those priorities. It provides direction regarding development on lands in prime agricultural areas and asks that there be careful thought given to the need for such conversions and that consideration be given to alternate locations if possible. The provincial policy statement also provides direction for the protection of natural features such as water sources that are an integral part of the agricultural region and are vital to the long-term health and sustainability of farming.

There are also other existing pieces of legislation that contribute to the protection of farmland and farm uses. The Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998, and the Nutrient Management Act, 2002, are just two examples, but as with much of the legislation designed to protect our environment, these acts exist in isolation. We need region-specific legislation developed in the context of the Golden Horseshoe. We must know where growth and development can occur, where it cannot and where it should not. Within the framework of where growth will be allowed, we must find where it can best be supported. The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, is part and parcel of the government's overall plan for responsible growth and management of the Golden Horseshoe.

Because the way we live tomorrow depends on how we plan and grow today, the government will consult



broadly on greenbelt protection to ensure that a fine balance is struck. The government's consultations will ensure that views from all regions within the Golden Horseshoe have a chance to be heard. Topics will be discussed and, within those topics, opinions from the spectrum will be examined.

As we gather this information, the government will be looking at the creation of a larger growth management plan for the Golden Horseshoe. It is an important component of our plan, and it is complementary to a greenbelt. A growth management plan for the Golden Horseshoe and the region that surrounds it will help to shape how and where growth will occur. Our plan will take into account existing population growth and infrastructure needs without jeopardizing areas that provide our food, water and recreation.

While the plan will incorporate the principles and framework of the greenbelt, its scope is much broader. It will address issues such as managing growth and identifying opportunities for growth and intensification, as well as infrastructure needs and implementation direction. This plan will include discussion of many of the issues that must be considered when developing a greenbelt plan. But how and where we grow will depend on having a greenbelt, which is why the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2003, is so crucial. We need the time to discuss the many issues that we have only just touched on today, and this act gives us that time. It gives us the time to discuss the green space we need to protect in the context of the requirements of the population growth we expect over the next 30 years.

This is not new. In other jurisdictions in North America and the United Kingdom, there have been successful examples of greenbelt approaches and protection. This is appropriate management and responsible growth in terms of the management of our land use.

As the parliamentary assistant for rural affairs, rural affairs are of course very close to my heart, and I feel that the support of a government for the rural communities is very important. In *Time* magazine—although it is an old issue; it is the issue for October 13 of last year—there was an article entitled “Rural Development: An Oxymoron,” and it was written by Fred McMahon, who is the director of the Centre for Globalization Studies at the Fraser Institute. I want to quote from his article, in particular the last two statements:

“Heroic rural programs trap people in unsustainable jobs and typically damage even more vulnerable people elsewhere. In the end, the best rural program is no rural program.”

I couldn't disagree more. I think it's in the public interest to support rural communities. We provide stewardship for rural communities.

I'm going to speak to the fact that in rural communities we have an entire lifestyle. The member for Oakville spoke to it earlier: the benefits of the social life in rural communities that can't be found elsewhere. We have a lifestyle that brings us close to nature, we have a sense of community that allows us to endeavour to keep our

communities well, and we work together in a way that isn't seen in other areas. Volunteerism is the backbone of our communities. It allows us to do the stewardship work that we feel is important. This is going to allow us to create the greenbelt, and we're going to do this with the communities' help and support.

After eight long years of runaway sprawl, for which we have our Tory friends to thank, we are taking decisive steps toward growth management in the Golden Horseshoe. That will start with the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act of 2003. I firmly believe that this is a real and positive change for all Ontarians.

I will repeat for your benefit, in the event that you weren't here when the minister spoke to it, the preamble of the act, which defines the purpose of this act very clearly:

“The government of Ontario recognizes that in order to protect environmentally sensitive land and farmland and contain urban sprawl, there is an immediate need to study an area in the part of Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe.

“The government recognizes that clear limits must be set on development in order to protect this valuable resource as a greenbelt for the long term.

“The government recognizes that good planning for environmental and agricultural protection and sustainable development will result in economic benefits to the residents of the Golden Horseshoe area.

“The government recognizes the environmental and agricultural significance of this area and its importance as a source of food, water, natural heritage systems, green space and recreation, resulting in an enhanced quality of life.

“The government recognizes that it is important to continue to protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine and to protect a broader greenbelt area.

“Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, enacts as follows.”

I hope that we are able to bring this to fruition.

1630

**The Acting Speaker:** There are still 30 seconds. We'll go to questions and comments.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I am happy to respond. I will participate at some length on Bill 27 later on. For those listening, what you've heard in the last half hour is the government's interpretation of what I call a ministerial bill. If you read the preamble, you will be familiar with the fact that this restricts many public rights, as it were, today.

If you were listening, it also implies that the lower-tier and upper-tier levels of government today were acting irresponsibly. I believe that they were all operating to an official plan. Those official plans are amended and approved by governments and, today, by the regional level of government in Durham region, which I can speak of: “Applications to amend or revoke such a zoning order may not be made, but the minister may....” In these cases it illustrates that the minister ultimately has irrevocable power.



The bill has some parts, but I can tell you, from participating in the pre-budget consultations, that the president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association said, and I know it's a fact, that in Durham region the land that has been held up for ransom—the land that was proposed for development under municipal and regional authority—has now been sort of neutralized. The cost of a lot, which for the first-time home buyer is really what this debate is about, has doubled. That's going on to the cost of a home, to families. If your policy here is to restrict home ownership, let's be clear about it.

What I see in this bill is more government interference. If you look at the whole section 8, it talks about retroactivity, it talks about limitations, it talks about no costs or remedies, no restitution. I think it's unfair expropriation of individuals' rights.

**Ms Churley:** I'm going to be supporting this bill.

I wanted to thank the task force members, many of whom I know. I think you made some good choices, Minister, in terms of the people on the task force. I know they had a lot to do with the recommendations before us today, and I know they would like to see this legislation move forward so we can move on and actually put it in place.

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** But.

**Ms Churley:** Of course there are "buts." The government is asking for some constructive—when do I ever not give constructive support? It's always constructive, and I, of course, do have some constructive recommendations and changes to make, which you will hear about. Some of them are very serious. I am sure the minister will agree with me that he has heard from some of his task force members—I hope this is not considered a prop—that there are some problems that need to be fixed through amendment or whatever. But I am in perfect agreement that we need to move this bill forward. We need to have the opportunity to speak to it, of course, and to make those recommendations, those changes that are absolutely necessary to make it work.

But if the government should continue and proceed to go ahead with the Castle Glen development, which I mentioned yesterday and today in this House—today I asked a question and I don't know why the Minister of Municipal Affairs didn't answer it, because he's the one I want to put the ministerial zoning order on this. It's been done before. It was done by the Tories and was done by us and it can be done by you. It is absolutely critical, Minister, because if you don't, it will fly in the face of everything that you're saying here today about wanting to protect the greenbelt around the big city. So I hope you'll say that you will kill that development as of today.

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** I appreciate the opportunity to lend two minutes worth of comments to the debate on this bill. I compliment highly the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Honourable John Gerretsen, for presenting us with a view for the future.

One of the things that I think is important to point out, as the members from Oakville and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex did, was that they combined the knowledge

they had from both municipal governments and from their areas, pulled it together and explained why the bill is going to be so important for us in the future.

I think it's time for us to start putting petty politics aside and understand that for the first time in many, many years the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of the Environment, the minister of infrastructure renewal, the Environmental Commissioner, Justice O'Connor, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be working collectively to make sure we're planning for the future and ensure that our environment is safe for the people of Ontario.

The day has come and everyone has acknowledged that we must look at what we're doing to the planet. I'm going to be bold and simply say that this must be done in order for us to have proper drinking water. Why do I mention it? Because I'm talking about the conservation authorities in our province. They need to be supported, and they have for many years worked toward the improvement of our water resources in the province of Ontario.

I want to compliment my own in Brant, the Grand River Conservation Authority. They, as do all the other conservation authorities, have some of the highest expertise in terms of how to protect those lands and what's necessary, what should be done on those properties and what shouldn't be done on those properties. We will be seeking the best advice from across the province, from all those ministries, to plan for the future for our children and, as the First Nations teach us, the seven generations after us, to be prepared for the planet to make sure we have a sustainable environment to live in.

I want to suggest that we need to do more work on brownfields. Brownfields in municipalities are waiting for us to redevelop them, because they have infrastructure already in place and they're not being used. I compliment the minister, and I look forward to more progress in the future.

**Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** After having listened to my colleagues from across the floor speak, I'm so happy to hear that if this bill passes, the birds are going to sing even more beautifully, the brooks will gurgle even louder, the grass is going to be greener, and apple pie is going to smell a whole lot nicer—only if this bill passes.

From the descriptions across the way, they should call this the spare-no-platitudes bill. I want some substance. I look forward to the critique of this bill from the member for York North, as our opposition critic, for some substance on what this bill is and the ramifications for communities and families across the province of Ontario.

Just by way of example, what's the housing policy to help start-ups, to help new families, young families trying to find new homes? They're seeing vacant lot prices spike exorbitantly. How much farther are they going to have to travel, and what are the transportation routes to support those families if this greenbelt strategy goes ahead as planned? That answer did not come in the discussions from across the way.



On the agricultural side, what is the agricultural framework? You can't just wave a magic wand and say they're going to stay in farm production. What is the agricultural framework to support our farmers? Specifically on the Niagara fruit belt, what is the plan to help our grape growers, our tender fruit producers, to make sure that as prices vary it stays viable for families to remain in farming in those industries?

One idea brought forward today that I was pleased to support was the concept of VQA-only stores. The government will continue to regulate who has a licence to sell alcohol in the province of Ontario—a wonderful idea: VQA winery stores. In fact, I have a private member's bill before the Legislature today to allow just that, to showcase our award-winning Ontario wines. This helps out the wineries, it helps out agriculture and it helps out tourism. These types of economic incentives can help keep the green area green.

Third, what about the municipalities that are trying to grow, that are trying to find ways of getting revenue to invest in services in their communities? That has not been answered. I look forward to the comments of our critics and substance from York North.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response?

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** Let me first of all thank the member from Oakville for giving a very good urban perspective as to why this legislation is needed, and second, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, my parliamentary assistant, for giving the agricultural and rural reasons why this bill is necessary.

I'd like to compliment the member from Toronto-Danforth for supporting this bill, and I hope her entire caucus will support the bill. She knows quite well that we cannot comment about the situation she mentioned, as it is before the Ontario Municipal Board right now.

I would also like to compliment the member from Brant for talking about the importance of good drinking water and the importance of redeveloping the brownfields we have in many of our communities.

1640

With respect to the member from Durham, let me just repeat once again that he shouldn't be scaremongering. As I've indicated before, all lands previously designated for urban development will remain available for urban development. It's there. We're not doing anything that will stop that from happening, as we have made quite clear to the task force. They have been busily at work under the competent chairmanship of Mayor Rob MacIsaac from Burlington and will be making a report to the government within a year, and we hope to have the bill passed within a year so we can have the policies in place so developers know exactly what they can develop in this area and so environmentalists know exactly what is going to be protected within this area.

That's what this is all about: to bring certainty to this whole question as to what should and shouldn't be developed and what should and shouldn't be retained. That's what it is all about. I hope for some very constructive debate and criticism, as well as suggestions by

the members of the opposition and the government members as well so we can make a good bill even better. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mrs Julia Munro (York North):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I just want to indicate at this point that I will be sharing my time with the member from Oak Ridges.

It gives me great pleasure to stand today and make a few comments on Bill 27, the question of the greenbelt. I think all of us recognize that the notion of a greenbelt—the parks, the forest, the farmlands, all that kind of image for us—in an area surrounding one of the major metropolitan centres of the world sounds very, very enticing. I am always conscious of the way in which even tourism is projected; there is always the notion there of the countryside. And there is no question that we all understand the value of the countryside. But when we look at this particular piece of legislation, we have to look at some issues that come out of what I will later refer to as a somewhat simplistic picture of the fact that we can simply draw a bigger green line around the city.

I think it is a question that has probably haunted people for a long time: When is urban sprawl urban sprawl? I spoke to my mother, who can remember a time as a life-long Torontonion—she was born in Toronto, as was her mother before her. I asked her, “Where was the edge of Toronto, as you recall, as a young girl?” Of course, fields and farms were around Eglinton and Bayview. Obviously, one could then argue that was urban sprawl as it began to go forward. There could be those who would look back in the history books and say, “No, it was actually Bloor Street.” But if we just want to look in the current generations, we are certainly faced with this issue.

I can remember that on the northwest corner of Finch and Bathurst, on the northwest corner there was a very large farmhouse and a working farm. As a young kid, I was quite intrigued by this and actually took pictures of that corner when there were fields on the other three corners, with this very large working farm at the corner. I asked my daughter, and she can remember the farms at the corner of Carville and Bathurst in Richmond Hill.

So the question of how we deal with growth is certainly not a new one. In the course of my comments, I'll try to present to you the importance of having a balance in looking at this. When I give you the descriptions I just have on what changes have come about in the course of my mother's lifetime, it's clear that at the same time we have created a Golden Horseshoe, an area that is vibrant, both socially and economically. You can look at those former fields and look at the communities and the neighbourhoods that have come to be. You can see the places where people go to school, where they work, the hospitals and businesses. People from all over Canada come to Toronto. People from all over the world come to Toronto. They have made a better life for themselves and their families in this area. So when we think of a *carte blanche* protected lands process, I think we have to



consider as very important where people are going to live and how we must balance the need for housing and businesses for the vibrancy of city life to be able to continue and respect the need for protected lands to ensure the best quality of life.

There are some things that we need to remember in terms of looking at one side of that equation, and that is that people need affordable places to live. Not everyone wants to live on the 20th, 40th or 50th floor of an apartment building. Families want to have a lawn for their kids to play on. Certainly home ownership has been a dream for many thousands—in fact, millions of people, and many of the people who have come to this general area of the Golden Horseshoe have been able to realize that dream.

The bill that we are looking at today proposes to have new growth and construction in Toronto concentrated on brownfield sites. Again, as a member of the former government that introduced the brownfields legislation and had it passed into law—it has generated a great deal of activity and urban renewal across this province—obviously I applaud that suggestion. But I think that one needs to look a little more closely at the numbers, the size and the number of brownfield sites and the kind of growth that this area sees.

While it may seem like a worthy aim, I'd suggest to you that when you look at the figures, it is unrealistic. From the Ministry of Municipal Affairs Web site there's a clear indication that by 2021 my home region of York will grow by more than 450,000 people. Today, we are looking at approximately 800,000 people in York region. This means that you're looking at growth by another half of the total there today. People in Peel will increase by 546,000, Durham by 254,000 and Halton by 196,000. You simply cannot expect all of these people to live on brownfield sites, particularly since the city of Toronto is expected to grow by 420,000. It is unlikely that there are enough brownfield sites in all of Canada to house the total GTA increase of 1.8 million people in 20 years.

The boundaries that have been set by this piece of legislation are very clear and arbitrary. As a member sitting right on the northern boundary of this, one naturally asks the question—if I cross the bridge, I'm into Simcoe—what kind of implications does this legislation have on places like Simcoe county? What kind of implications does it have on areas like Guelph and Barrie? The list goes on.

In its own official plan, the city of Toronto recognized the value of the brownfield site, but it also recognized that it cannot accommodate all future development.

1650

In its report *Flash Forward: Projecting Population and Employment to 2031* in a Mature Urban Area, it says that the city could only accommodate 537,000 people by the year 2031 under its official plan. They also estimate that 55% of the city's share of the projected population will seek ground-related housing. The city's report indicates, "As the city becomes fully 'built out,' it will be increasingly difficult to add to its stock of single and semi-

detached housing, the housing that young family households are seeking."

The report also states, "As people age in place, and as others become less able to move due to gradually rising real estate prices throughout the GTA, the city will be increasingly unable to supply the ground-related housing that new households with children will be seeking. This will put upward pressure on the prices of existing ground-related housing in the city, until growth rates slow and some new equilibrium is reached."

The Urban Development Institute estimates that brownfields and intensification can accommodate only 30% of the projected population growth in the central Ontario region by 2030. They also point out that this assumes that local councils and ratepayers will accept intensification, something which is currently not the accepted norm in many municipalities. I've mentioned, obviously, the question of where this increased population is going to go and the problems that the brownfields represent. I think it's also important to note that while the minister has referred to this as a "time out," it's really important to understand that it's only a time out in perhaps his mind and a very few other people's.

There are realities that continue. We need to look at those in the context, for instance, of housing costs. What has happened when there has been that, frankly, tremor to the whole industry? What effects does that have on housing costs? According to the Urban Development Institute of Ontario, since the announcement of Bill 27, residential serviced lot prices in the GTA have soared, and this is just from the announcement of the bill. So that "time out" that the minister has referred to is something that has devastating repercussions in other parts of the community.

Housing demands don't take a time out. The cost of a serviced lot has risen from \$4,000 to over \$6,000 a front foot in the GTA. In Aurora, the price per front foot for a 20-foot freehold townhouse lot has increased from \$3,500 in October 2003 to \$5,500 in March 2004. This is a 57% increase. The average lot frontage for a single detached home is approximately 36 feet. Therefore, the cost of a serviced lot alone is \$216,000. This is even before your house is built.

So you may understand, then, why I suggest to you that affordable housing will be a thing of the past. Sources in the development industry are saying that the Liberal proposals are the worst signal that the industry could have received from the government, and that new home buyers may begin to see higher prices from the lot price increases by the end of the calendar year.

The Canadian Real Estate Association announced in February 2004 that the average resale home price in Toronto was \$310,000, which is about 10% higher than the October 1989 price spike of \$280,000. Overall, the percentage of serviced lots in the GTA, relative to Toronto's resale housing costs, is now 70%.

As yet, we haven't spoken about what happens elsewhere, recognizing the fact that, in theory, we would all like to see more trees, more parks, more forest area, more



agricultural land. Portland, Oregon, has had an urban growth boundary similar to a greenbelt in place for a number of years. According to the Urban Land Institute, this boundary has resulted in single-family lot prices increasing by 35% in just four years, from 1995 to 1999. Commercial prices in the same period increased from 25% to 39%. Industrial park costs went up a whopping 98%. So I think you can see here that the experience elsewhere certainly doesn't bode well for the area that we're speaking about today.

Potential homeowners and business investors simply cannot afford types of costs such as these. New housing will become less and less affordable for residents of the GTA. We could end up with a city where only the wealthy can afford a single-family home. Areas of middle- and lower-income single-family homes in Toronto would likely be demolished over time to make way for high-rise units and monster homes that we see already in some of our areas in Toronto.

I think there's no question, certainly speaking as a member from the northern part of York region, that none of us likes sprawl for its own sake. I think that there is common agreement on that. We're also very unhappy with the ancillary effects of that: the gridlock, pollution, rundown infrastructure and waste of land. I think there is a great deal of agreement on this.

But the problem, when we look at this particular piece of legislation, is that this is not the way to deal with this. The greenbelt legislation is not a restriction on sprawl; it is an end of development. It is an extreme device that will lead to a shortage of housing and drive up the price of housing that is built. The proposed greenbelt really doesn't answer the question of sprawl. In looking at Bill 27, the government, I believe, has failed to provide any kind of clear direction to the task force and the public about the extent and width of the greenbelt and what effects it will have on landowners and local governments.

The Liberal election plan said that they would protect a greenbelt of 600,000 acres around Toronto. As 470,000 acres of the Oak Ridges moraine have already been protected by the previous PC government and thousands more acres of the Niagara Escarpment by former PC governments, I have to ask, what areas will the Liberals be protecting? If in fact you add up the entire area of the Oak Ridges moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and Rouge Park, almost a million acres of land are already protected. Will the government add on thousands of acres outside the moraine and the escarpment, or will they just add up what has already been preserved and claim they are doing something new?

The Liberal election plan promised real protection for the moraine, promising to cancel 6,600 new-home development in Richmond Hill, and we all know what happened to that promise.

1700

Something else that I think is very significant about this bill is the fact that it supersedes what has historically been the power of municipalities. There has been reference made by members opposite to their experience on

local government, and there have also been expressions of support for the conservation authorities. But quite frankly, this particular bill takes away those powers. Both this and Bill 26 set the stage for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, or the cabinet, to seize control of all of the local decision-making from local municipalities.

Bill 26 provides one definition of an urban settlement area but provides that the minister can change it at any time. Bill 27, the bill we are debating today, has a different definition of an urban settlement area. What kind of message does this send to municipalities?

When the minister introduced Bill 26, he said, "We are moving quickly in our agenda for positive change by taking steps that would ensure that unwanted urban expansions couldn't be forced upon communities." Then he said, "The Strong Communities Act, if passed, would help to ensure that locally elected officials remained in control of land use planning in their municipality." However, the next day, Bill 27 was introduced and the government ended local control of planning for municipalities in the greenbelt study area. I want to just point out that as a result of this, in the areas that appear to be most affected by the greenbelt study area, the mayors have all come together and formed a group to look at, from their perspective, what kinds of things they might expect from this rather draconian, top-down legislation.

Municipalities already have a process in place when they undertake any kind of urban expansion, and they must undertake an exhaustive process of studies to justify any expansion. In 1989, the region of Halton started the Halton urban structure review, the purpose of which was to provide a comprehensive plan for the provincially mandated requirement for new urban designated lands in the region. With consultations and an OMB review, this process has taken 10 years to complete at the regional level, and the plan is still being delayed and challenged. Local governments have done a huge amount of work developing local plans.

Also, something that up to this point I don't feel has been given proper recognition is the question of individual property rights, private property rights. Obviously there's always a delicate balance to be maintained when we're talking about the public good and private property, but there is no recognition here, nor, as far as I can see from the makeup of the task force, any voice that speaks for the many hundreds of thousands of private property owners who woke up the morning after the announcement of the bill to discover that their lands were frozen. So I think we need to be looking at this particular area and what kind of balance is being sought. The bill obviously is silent on this. It talks about the creation of this extra-wide green line with no thought or understanding of the fact that people who have bought their dream property have just done that. What kind of insecurity, instability, is there for them in the light of this time out?

While the moratorium on urban uses outside of urban settlement areas is proposed to be confined to one year, the scale of restriction and its severity suggests a lengthier suspension of democratic and property rights.



The minister admitted in a National Post article on February 17 that some lands may be expropriated. He said specifically, "Is expropriation possible?" His answer, "Yes. Who knows?" Ontarians want to know. Landowners and farmers in the proposed greenbelt want to know. Taxpayers want to know how much expropriation will cost them.

The Ottawa greenbelt is almost 50,000 acres and the National Capital Commission owns about three quarters of its lands. Most of the land was purchased by the National Capital Commission between 1958 and 1966 at a cost of \$40 million in 1966 dollars. The equivalent around Toronto today would be hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars. There has to be some recognition here that property owners have rights. Property owners have the need for a voice in these discussions.

We also need to come back to the issue I raised at the very beginning about the minister's comments that the moratorium is to be seen as a time out. It's only a time out from his perspective. Forty thousand people move to York region every year. They don't have a time out. Municipalities that look at the balance of their assessment, whether it's residential, commercial or industrial, need to know. They don't have a time out. There are all kinds of people who have various interests who need to know. They're not having a time out. Those pressures continue to grow.

It is unfair that Bill 27 retroactively halts applications that could lead to urban expansions. This is a heavy-handed action by this government that has already interfered with many locally approved projects. The moratorium has already halted a number of large projects in rural areas in the GTA.

The Hamilton Spectator reported on February 19 that the Liberal moratorium has halted the construction of the Canadian Reformed Church in Flamborough. The Liberal plan has stopped the construction of a Tim Hortons on Highway 6 north in Hamilton, a campground in Flamborough and a house for farm help in Ancaster. Also stalled are efforts to recognize an illegal mobile home park and overnight accommodations at the Four Seasons Nature Resort and to finalize the site plan for the John Bayus mobile park, both in Flamborough.

In the St Catharines Standard of March 11, Bill Hodgson, the mayor of the town of Lincoln, says the greenbelt restrictions are so tight, they do not permit developments that would be considered ancillary uses to farms. I know in my own community this is an important issue as well. An old fruit processing facility on Jordan Road was recently purchased with the intention of converting it to a farm supply outlet, but it requires a zoning change—impossible under the development freeze. Mayor Hodgson said, "This is about support for agriculture. There is a need for some flexibility. Life, business and commerce do go on." They don't have a time out.

At the other end of the frozen zone, we have applications by both Loblaws and Tim Hortons in the township of Brock. You know what is lost in this is the fact that

there are about 200 part- and full-time jobs that then will move. You have to wonder if those investors make the decision to go up the road to Ramara township, to cross over the Talbot River. Is that really what we're asking for in this legislation? Is that really what the minister is looking for, that you create an area now where you go farther, where you create or attempt to create the same business climate, the same housing developments and so forth, but on area lands that are further away? I think that is one of the most perplexing leaps of logic in this whole discussion.

1710

The other thing that I think we have to look at is the fact that there are thousands of people who work in the construction industry, and many of them have their jobs threatened by this moratorium. Mark Parsons of the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association wrote an article in The Globe and Mail in which he said:

"The residential construction industry creates more than 125,000 direct and indirect jobs in the greater Toronto area each year and contributes almost \$3 billion a year to the provincial treasury. In recent years, we've been the only consistently bright light in the provincial economy.

"Because we've been able to sell more than 40,000 new homes in each of the past four years, we have kept prices low, kept tradesmen and construction workers fully employed and supported companies all over the province that produce the goods and services that go into new homes.

"If we end up with a government-induced housing shortage, prices will rise, rental rates will rise, jobs will be lost, and the government tax revenues will falter."

In the remarks made earlier by the government, there was some effort made to bring into this greenbelt the whole issue of agriculture. I would like to take a few moments to talk about that, because nowhere in the bill itself does it talk beyond greenbelt, so we're not really sure of the commitment with regard to agriculture. But I would like to speak for a moment about the kind of commitment that the GTA has toward agriculture.

Agriculture is still the second most important economic driver in the Golden Horseshoe, and local governments have acted on this fact. The four regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York have set up a steering committee which has responded to the agricultural studies done in the late 1990s that recognized how important agriculture was to the GTA. This steering committee, representing both municipal and regional government, has completed focus groups and hosted a symposium, with ongoing work to bring people together representing the different levels of government and the federations of agriculture. I guess my concern is, with this time out, what happens to the kind of work that has already begun, that has been done from, literally, the grass roots?

At this level—that is, at the regional and the municipal level—there is a recognition of the importance of agriculture and the need to maintain and increase its viability.

Farmers, like any other business people, need the surety of a regulatory framework which allows capital expansion, not one that freezes decision-making for one year, not one that creates uncertainty, not one that extols green space and not agriculture. Too often, I think, urban dwellers think that greenspace and agriculture are interchangeable. Obviously, they are not.

If the government is embarking on a greenbelt plan, it must take into account the needs of farmers and it must also, I would argue, recognize the work that has been done. There is nothing in this legislation that gives us comfort in knowing the work that has been done, whether you're talking about the Niagara area and its very successful agricultural policy or the work that is being done at the level within the GTA, has been recognized.

What we're seeing here is that there is a need for balance, and I don't believe this piece of legislation represents that kind of balance. I don't think the government has taken into account the need to balance the needs of future homeowners, future Canadians to this area, with the need to preserve or to have preserved areas.

Bill 27 is a draconian, knee-jerk reaction to a problem that doesn't have a simple answer. The future development of Toronto and the area needs to be thought out and planned carefully, which the moratorium and the greenbelt plan do not do. The government's approach to sprawl is a top-down, authoritarian one. With both Bills 26 and 27, the government removes power from local government and citizens and centralizes power in the hands of the Premier's office and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The government should have worked with local government, citizens and builders to design a healthy, balanced model of development. The Liberals have failed to do this. They should have followed what was done previously by the PC government, with Smart Growth as part of a bottom-up process that takes into account local needs, affordable housing and the need for an infrastructure commitment.

When we embarked on the Smart Growth process to promote and plan for future growth, it was to do so in ways that create strong economy, build vibrant communities and promote clean, healthy environments across the province. The Smart Growth approach was made up of three core values. Building consensus and creating partnerships was the first—growth issues across municipal boundaries and jurisdictions to encompass areas such as transportation, infrastructure and land use and how they affect people differently.

Our second principle was promoting growth, because it generates new businesses, jobs and the revenue necessary to support the services we value. This growth must be good growth to protect the environment and ensure residents a high quality of life.

The third principle was to look at the big picture. Smart Growth takes a longer-term view in planning for growth. It is a strategic process to ensure that the benefits of well-planned growth are shared across the province in ways that build strong rural and urban communities. It

helps government set priorities for public spending on infrastructure and to attract and accommodate desirable growth.

Our government established the Smart Growth panel for central Ontario in 2002, and it reported back a year later. The panel brought together community leaders, leaders representing local governments, businesses and environmental groups, educational institutions, transportation organizations and the development industry. The panel reported back to the government about a year ago with a plan to manage and attract growth in central Ontario. The report emphasized reshaping where and how people live by encouraging balanced growth so that people can live and work in close proximity; encouraging more compact development, protecting the natural heritage system and unique agricultural lands; and managing urban expansion to prevent leapfrog settlement. I think this is something that is really important to understand, because what the time-out freeze has done is obviously create the kind of climate where people will begin to look at the choices of leapfrogging.

The plan would also protect the environment, fight gridlock and take a more collaborative approach to waste management; upgrade infrastructure, both hard and soft, to accommodate expected growth; and build prosperous, liveable communities.

That is our approach to looking at this issue, which certainly is one that, as I say, has been with us for generations. We do have to look at the way in which we can look at balancing some of these things.

1720

I'd like to just draw my remarks to a close and look at some of the hallmark qualities here that I think we're facing in this piece of legislation today. I would suggest to you that the first one of these is simplistic. To be able to suggest that you can simply paint a big green line around Toronto is really overlooking many of the kinds of initiatives that have gone on within local governments. It overlooks the value of the work that has been done.

Since we don't know exactly where it is, is it simply redefining those areas, like the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine and the protected lands in Rouge area? Is that what we're doing? Is that what we're creating all this angst about, simply to be able to draw a red line around the green line and say, "Well, this is what we've done," when of course it has been in existence for years. If it is just that, then it's kind of an exercise in public relations.

The other thing about the simplistic nature of this legislation is the moratorium itself. This is like taking a snapshot and freezing everything in time. But what it has actually done is leave everything else outside of that snapshot, the things that are in limbo: the question of the security around what local governments already have in mind.

I'd also suggest to you that another quality of this is that there's some inherent contradiction. The minister and his party have been very clear in the lead-up to these pieces of legislation, Bills 26 and 27, about empowering



municipalities. While most people would think empowering means allowing them to make decisions, that they would maintain their ability in local decision-making, what we find out is that this is rhetoric. This in fact is much more a top-down approach to the Liberal solution of a problem.

The other thing that's contradictory about this is the fact that much has been made of the need to have transparency. I would suggest to you that what we really have seen here is a new meaning to transparency. It's transparent, all right. What it really means is that the real decision-making is at the cabinet table. That, of course, is not what most of us think of as a transparent decision-making process.

The last characteristic I would comment on is that it is short-sighted. It doesn't have a vision. It draws no line. People who are sitting in these lands have no information, no idea, for instance, where people are going to go as time passes, how municipalities are going to develop, what power they will have over their own local decision-making. There is a lack of balance.

We've heard a great deal from the government about the need to protect flora and fauna. I don't think there's anyone who doesn't understand the value of that. We understand that through the watershed system of our conservation authorities, new science has been able to bring to us a great deal of information in terms of water resources, as well as understanding the needs that housing development places on our environment. Those things, then, are not there for us in this time out.

Finally, I think that it's short-sighted because it doesn't provide a vision that would provide a goal: This is what it's going to look like, but also, piece of mind. I think that knowing where we are going as a province, where this green line is going and what it's going to look like, is extremely important to those people who live and work in these areas and those people who want to come and join us.

Thank you. I'll pass it over to my colleague.

**Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** I'm pleased to participate in this debate. Let me say, first of all, how much I appreciate the work of my colleague the member from York North on this file. She has researched it well, she has provided very important insight to our caucus as we've deliberated on this legislation and she has had extensive meetings with stakeholders. I know that because I've been advised by various groups, whether that be municipalities or representatives from the development or building industry planners. They have been particularly impressed with the kind of knowledge that the member brings to the task of critic for this portfolio.

I want to say as well how absolutely disappointed I am in the Minister of Municipal Affairs for having brought this bill forward. For someone who has a very stalwart background at the municipal level—he was a mayor of a very, I should say, historic municipality in this province. I had, prior to seeing this legislation, always considered that he was certainly very knowledgeable on municipal issues. This has changed my mind about that. I have to say that—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Can I have order? I want to hear the debate.

**Mr Klees:** I don't mean this as a personal affront to the minister, because I know that he was probably cringing when he was asked to table this legislation. He did his job. He did it well. He looked confident. But the minute we asked the first question his confidence crumbled, because he knew that he could not defend legislation as flawed as Bill 27.

Let me share with you, Speaker—because I know you're particularly interested in this, representing an area just outside of Toronto—that the pressure this legislation will put on communities such as you represent, and many of us do, will be far-reaching. The minister, through this bill, takes upon himself the powers to overrule the good work that has been done by municipalities for many years. I find that particularly contradictory, because I recall that when the minister was in opposition, he would advocate at great length, and rightfully so, for the role of municipalities. I heard him say on many occasions that if in fact the municipality believes that a particular policy initiative is appropriate for the local community, the provincial government should in fact be supportive of that. After all, who knows best? It's the people who live in the community. It's the local council that's been elected to represent the members of that community, particularly in the area of community planning.

Now, with Bill 27, for some reason the minister felt it necessary to give himself the power to overrule, to effectively throw out years of planning that was done by the local municipality and impose what he in his wisdom—or perhaps better yet, and worse still, the civil service around him and people who are absolutely disconnected from the local municipality—feels is appropriate. We can't allow this to happen. We have had representatives from communities, municipalities, the planning industry, builders, developers—anyone who has any relationship at all with practical community building—appeal to us to do what we can to hold back the implementation of this legislation.

1730

With regard to the imposition of this moratorium, one of the issues that I'm going to be very interested to see how the minister handles over time is, first of all, the immediate financial harm that already has been brought on many Ontarians, many landowners, whose properties are caught in this moratorium. What is the minister going to do with an individual who has been holding a property, perhaps the second generation, and has been looking at that property with the rights to develop that property based on existing official plans? And now with this legislation, the minister is effectively saying to that family, "No more." In fact, the minister has said very clearly that if it so pleases him, he may well expropriate that land, and with regard to—

**Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton):** Where?

**Mr Klees:** Well, he did say it. In fact, the minister was quoted in a number of newspapers. He himself just



admitted it. He was quoted in the *National Post* as saying, "Yes, yes, absolutely. That is a very definite possibility." And so you have people in the province of Ontario whose property rights have been taken away through this legislation. I suggest to the minister that he will probably end up with a number of lawsuits, and rightfully so, challenging what has taken place here.

On the issue of property rights, Speaker, I might say to you, isn't it interesting that we are one of the few jurisdictions internationally that does not have property rights entrenched in the Constitution of our country? Would it not be appropriate, instead of for the minister to come forward with this legislation—if he truly wanted to do something as Minister of Municipal Affairs for people in the province, what he should have brought forward is, first of all, legislation that entrenches property rights for people in Ontario. So then, if the minister decides that he wants to sweep in and take property that's been in a family for generations for his own purpose, he would at least have to compensate them for fair market value. That would be reasonable. But no, that's not what the minister has done. He has simply done the top-heavy, heavy-handed thing, and that is to say, "We're going to cater to certain lobby groups and provide a facade of appearing to do what is in the best interests of the environment."

I don't have to tell you, Speaker, that this is the same group who, during the election campaign, spoke about their commitment to the environment. The issue in that election campaign was that they were going to save the Oak Ridges moraine and disallow some 6,600 units to be constructed on the Oak Ridges moraine, even though that 6,600 units had been negotiated and approved by environmental groups who were involved over a period of months and years, really, to develop what turned out to be one of the most historic pieces of legislation and agreements ever arrived at between property owners and environmental groups in the province of Ontario. Some 460,000 acres of property had been put into permanent protection throughout the Oak Ridges moraine. And the 6,600 units that had been approved, had been approved on areas in the moraine that were not environmentally sensitive, that in fact would not do any damage to the environment. Yet this government, because it appeared to be the popular thing to do—and it was just one more of the 230 promises that the Liberals made on the election campaign. They knew full well that they weren't going to keep that one, along with the other 230. So their strong action for the environment was to make a promise, and then after they were elected it was to break it.

What they have done here in follow-up to that broken promise is to introduce an absolutely worthless piece of legislation that will neither protect the environment nor do anything for the future planning of property use, of land use, in the greater Toronto area. What the minister has done with this legislation is to effectively throw out years of planning in municipalities across the GTA, planning that was done with a great deal of sensitivity to the environment, planning that was done with a great deal of sensitivity to planning principles that had been signed on

to by municipal councillors, by planners, by people who understand the importance of maintaining a balance.

Balance is something, obviously, that this government knows nothing about; if they know something about it, they certainly aren't conducting themselves in a way that would respect balance. The Minister of the Environment appears puzzled by that. By balance, I'd explain to her, we mean that when we live in a province that in fact is one of the places in the world that people look to come to because of the quality of life that is here, unless the minister is prepared to put up a wall around the province and say, "No more growth in the province of Ontario," we're going to have to find a way to balance that growth with protection of the environment.

For the minister to simply come forward and say, "Here's the way we'll solve it. We'll just call a moratorium and there'll be no more building anywhere in this area that I deem to be a greenbelt," that won't work. You'll find it won't work. You just bought yourself a year, but in that year you've also eroded your credibility as a Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You'll have eroded the credibility of your party one further step. You'll have sent a signal to the people of this province that you do not care for the good work of local municipalities and their responsibility to plan their local communities, you will have created financial hardship for many people who are caught by this legislation, and at the end of the day you'll have to answer to them.

I'm going to make a prediction that the minister, after he's had an opportunity to see the negative effects that this legislation has—and in York region alone, I can tell him, he has added about \$50,000 to the cost of the average home overnight by introducing this legislation. If he doesn't understand that, it is basically a principle of supply and demand. You, sir, through this legislation have dried up a supply of much-needed housing throughout the GTA. You yourself will be responsible for ensuring that hundreds of thousands of people—young people, young families—will not be able to own their own home, and there is no need for it. What there is need for is a balanced approach to urban planning. We called it Smart Growth. I implore the minister to go back to the Smart Growth principles that were signed off on by municipalities across the province and to take a second look here. It's not too late. You can still withdraw this legislation. I urge you to do so. Take into consideration the Smart Growth principles that will serve this province well and, at the end of the day, would serve you well as minister, because you will be seen to have done the right thing.

We should allow the minister now to stand in his place and we should ask for unanimous consent to have the minister withdraw this legislation now, undertake to go back to the drawing board and do the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Will the minister do that?

1740

**The Acting Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Ms Churley:** Far be it from me to take on the role of defending the Liberal government, but come on, guys.



You've got to be kidding over there. The members for Oak Ridges and York North, I know you're representing a particular type of view, but come on. That's nuts. You can't take that position in this day and age. You were in government and saw all the problems that were created, which led you to bring in legislation—you were dragged kicking and screaming—to protect the Oak Ridges moraine.

I have some problems with this legislation which I will be pointing out later, but we have to move forward. There were some very good people involved in, I know, influencing the minister here and trying to get this. This is just setting the table. There's a whole lot of work to be done, but come into the latest century. Where are you over there? I can't believe what you just said.

Look, on top of that, it was the Tory government that threw out the NDP—some of you were here and most of you weren't, but we brought in very strong green planning legislation. I think the Liberals said it went too far at the time and didn't support it because it was very green. But one of the first things the Tories did when they came into office was gut the environmental ministry and get rid of the new Green Planning Act, which was two years on the road getting consensus. People agreed overall on all sides. They threw it out. But not only did they throw it out; they went back to the old Planning Act, but even, significantly, made some wording changes in that to reduce its strength. That's what happened under that government.

So this is a rare occasion. I'm actually here helping defend this piece of legislation today. I think that we need to go forward with it, and quickly.

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** First of all I want to thank the members for York North and Oak Ridges for their comments. It's unfortunate that it wasn't very constructive criticism. They really didn't add anything to the debate because, as the member for Oak Ridges knows quite well, all lands that are currently designated for urban development can be developed regardless of this particular legislation. There is a supply for residential development in this area of at least 10 to 15 years. He knows that. He knows that as well.

Let us, please, no longer talk about the so-called Oak Ridges moraine deal. We made your deal a lot better by at least securing that approximately 900 to 1,000 units of housing that you would have allowed to be built there will not be built. That's sort of the bottom line on that one.

We are very proud of the work that the task force is doing on the Oak Ridges moraine to give us advice as to how the policy should be developed if and when this legislation is passed. May I say that on this task force we have people from the home-building community, we have people from the development community, we have people from agriculture, from the aggregates. It's led by a municipal leader in this immediate area: the mayor of Burlington. We are very proud of the work that they're doing. It is our intention to have not only this legislation passed but also to have the principles that will guide future development of this area clearly set out within a

year, so that the developers know what they can develop and the environmental community will know what is going to be protected for the generations to come. That's what this legislation is all about.

I say again that we're looking for constructive criticism of ways in which this good bill can be improved on for the benefit of all Ontarians.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'm pleased to make a few comments on Bill 27 as well as the comments made by my two colleagues.

It is interesting listening to the minister's two-minute comments here when he talks about all the different people who took part in his panel. Of course, those are exactly the same types of people in the same area who took part in the Smart Growth panel. You know that, and I hope you wouldn't deny that.

There are a couple of things we have to look at here. One of course is the compensation to landowners, people who have invested in thinking they are actually going to have some investment in the future. They will be expecting compensation. I expect, quite frankly, that we will see a number of lawsuits as a result of this, when the final tally comes out, because obviously they do want to protect green space, and who is really going to argue with that except people who have invested in that region under speculation?

Another thing is the moratorium. I was at the announcement the day the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing made the announcement, and I was kind of astounded at some of the comments. I think of the moratorium that the Minister of the Environment put on water-taking permits. It affected bottled water plants, it affected the aggregate industry etc, but it didn't affect landfills—nothing around the landfill. I've been writing letters to her and I've been trying to get some reaction from the ministry on why we are penalizing people with a moratorium on a water bottling plant, and yet—

**Hon Mr Gerretsen:** What did you do about it when you were in government?

**Mr Dunlop:** The fact of the matter is, you know it's around the source protection legislation. That's the new term we're going by here.

In my riding, we have a landfill that's going to be dramatically affected by the amount of water that's being pumped out of the ground, and she won't put a moratorium on that.

**The Acting Speaker:** Response from the member from Oak Ridges.

**Mr Klees:** I thank the members for their comments.

I want to remind the Minister of Municipal Affairs that it was our government, the previous government, that passed the historic Oak Ridges moraine legislation. Successive governments prior to that had done study after study. Not one government took the initiative to actually put in place legislation that protects the Oak Ridges moraine. We did.

The minister is absolutely right when he says that he is looking for constructive criticism. The reason that I asked him to withdraw this legislation is because that is as

constructive as I could get. The truth is that this legislation is so flawed—we looked for ways to improve it. There is no way to improve it, because it's unnecessary. We have in place strong legislation to support environmental lands surrounding the GTA. We have in place smart growth principles that everyone has signed on to. All that the minister has to do, rather than create additional red tape, which is all this bill is, is simply to implement smart growth principles. That's what he should do. That's what his stakeholders have told him and will continue to tell him. Yes, they'll participate in your advisory council because they have to. It's the only chance they have of bringing some sense to what is about to be implemented as legislation through this bill.

I urge him one more time: The best constructive criticism or advice that I can offer is to do away with this legislation, rely on the good advice that you can get from your local municipalities, from the stakeholders, from the environmental groups, and let's get on and let the minister get on with simply showing good, solid leadership as the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

1750

**Ms Churley:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. What have I got, about 10 minutes to begin my hour?

All I can say to the Tories on this is, get out of town. I mean, this is crazy stuff.

I'll be going into more detail about some of the issues of concern about this bill when we next take it up here in the House. But I say today to people that there is a bit of a silver lining, in my view and in the view of some other people that I have been talking to about the new Liberal government getting off to a very bad start as a new government and having to break its promise to the—I don't get an hour; I only get 30 minutes? I'm sure you'd love to hear what I have to say more than the Tories who just spoke. But I believe that there is one silver lining to the broken promises on the Oak Ridges moraine.

You will recall that the Liberals made a promise to kill these 6,000 housing units, but when the developers yelled and screamed and wouldn't play ball, they flip-flopped like crazy and it was a big embarrassment for the government. Let's face it: Mike Colle in particular was a champion of the Oak Ridges moraine and played a huge part in pushing the previous government into moving forward on that. But of course when the government found out that they made a promise—I have pages of broken promises that I could read off today, but I want to focus on this particular one. It occurs to me that the silver lining is that the promise to be green was a great embarrassment for the government, and suddenly the impression was given that they weren't going to live up to that promise. As a result of that—I believe as a direct result of that—they are now trying to show the environmental community and the conservation community and local residents who were very concerned and upset about what happened in the Oak Ridges moraine that they really are green and are going to be moving—I think it's great if you do—on a number of green fronts.

I guess my concern is that in a bill like this—and the Tories pointed out some of the issues, some of the things that the municipalities—issues that, as local members, you are going to hear about and that developers and municipalities in some cases will not be happy about. My concern is that the Liberal government will end up caving on some of these things, as they had to, or felt they had to, on the Oak Ridges moraine. We're going to watch very, very closely to make sure that doesn't happen.

The bill is, as I said, very welcome. We need to move forward. We have to go into the future. When people get up and talk about this just in terms of the environment—and for me, it is the most important part of the bill—this is also about our economy. The minister and some others talked today about gridlock. We talked about transportation and the need to build in existing urban areas, existing built-up areas. All of those kinds of things, if we don't do them—just leave aside the environment for the moment, which I will dwell on when we come back to later. But just as a backdrop, think about the hours that are being lost by people sitting in cars, commuting and commuting, and that is going to increase more and more. It is just straight productivity lost, but there is also the impact on the environment as more and more cars and trucks and all these vehicles are stuck on these highways creating even more bad air.

So there are a whole lot of reasons why we need to go into the future and bring in strong legislation that will not only protect our environment but also bring in some sane planning in the whole belt around the Toronto-Hamilton area.

I said earlier that I do have some pretty big concerns with the bill, and I'm hoping that the minister is correct when he says he's willing to listen to constructive criticism and will be willing to make some amendments. I think one of the ironies—I suppose it's not surprising—is that some of the very things some of the Conservative members mentioned that they are worried about and want the bill withdrawn over because they think they're too draconian are things that I have the opposite concerns about. For instance, when the Conservatives say there are going to be all kinds of legal challenges, from my reading of the bill—and at this point it's a pretty short bill. It's just setting the table for the real regulations, the real work that'll come later. But it seems to be going to great lengths to ensure that the government cannot be sued for infringing on property rights. That's a double-edged sword. It makes me worry, when I see a bill that is going out of its way to give a government that kind of protection, that there may be cases where people have legitimate concerns and legitimate reasons, and they should have the right, in that case, if they're not being treated fairly.

The other thing is—again it's the opposite concern the Tories have about the bill, and I mentioned it when the minister introduced it—some significant loopholes. Those are that the Minister of Municipal Affairs can create a rezoning that would otherwise contravene the act. That's in subsection 7(1). The minister can also modify or replace definitions of urban settlement areas



and exempt any land or land uses. The minister also retains the ability to amend or issue zoning orders within the study areas.

There are a lot of pieces to this bill that I think we have to tighten up. I will be talking later as well about what we call leapfrog development and some of the areas like, I think, Simcoe North—you would know that, Mr Speaker—that have been left out, and some other areas which can create some leapfrog development, which in fact would make things worse. You'd be building up in areas that were left out of the belt, creating new communities or whatever in those areas which have no infrastructure around them whatsoever and would just create more environmental problems and other problems within those areas.

The last thing I want to say on this today—I've said it before and I'll say it again, and you'll keep hearing from

me about this—is that the minister mentioned earlier, when I brought it up for the third time in two days in this chamber, the development of a year-round town on the Niagara Escarpment. The minister says he can't discuss it because it's the OMB. I remember Liberals, when they were sitting over here and the Tories would say that in response to questions from the Liberals about the Oak Ridges moraine. That is not going to wash, and it will belie this legislation if they go ahead and let that town be built on the Oak Ridges moraine.

With that, Mr Speaker, it being 6 of the clock—

**The Acting Speaker:** It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

*The House adjourned at 1759.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

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## Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38<sup>e</sup> législature

# Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

# Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 30 March 2004

Mardi 30 mars 2004



Speaker  
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président  
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 March 2004

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 mars 2004

*The House met at 1845.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2004

#### LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Mr Smitherman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various Acts with respect to the protection of health information / Projet de loi 31, Loi édictant et modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait à la protection des renseignements sur la santé.

**Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm privileged today to have the opportunity to share my time with the member for Northumberland and the member for Mississauga East. It is my privilege to rise today to speak about Bill 31, the Health Information Protection Act, 2004.

Last week this House was united in grief. On this issue, I believe we have the opportunity to unite in common purpose. This bill is one on which there is broad agreement. It's a bill that builds on the work done by the previous government and it incorporates the work done by a unified and unanimous committee.

I think it's worth saying often that our government has taken a very different approach to the way committees work. On this one, we had a lot of stakeholder input before we brought the draft of the bill forward. Subsequent to that, as a result of the work that we took to committee and the work of the committee, we've been able to improve the bill further, and I think that's terrific.

The protection of personal health information is a vital part of our government's plan for positive change in health care. That's because this bill is anchored on the principle that patients are at the centre of their care. Patient-centred health care is the bedrock principle that guides the changes that we are making in health care. That is our transformation agenda.

We have a responsibility to ensure that people have the information, the resources and the opportunities to be informed and effective participants in their own health and well-being. We believe that patients must have the means to control how their personal information is used

because, after all, it belongs to them. Bill 31 puts people in charge of their own health information.

The McGuinty government's plan for positive change aims to make health care into a true system. Let's face it, what we have today is really more of a collection of separate silos than a properly connected system. We have great institutions of the highest calibre of health professionals anywhere, state-of-the-art equipment and know-how, but there aren't the undeniable benefits that flow from co-operation and from having a common cause. Our government has made it a priority to tear down the walls between health care silos, walls that stand between the patient and the care they need.

Under Bill 31, health providers in the patient's circle of care will be able to share information and work as a team to make the best possible care decisions for that patient. It will enable us to harness the vast potential of health information technologies to deliver better quality and safer care. The protections in Bill 31 give people confidence that no matter where they receive care, their personal health information is safe and secure. Public trust is at the heart of this bill.

Public trust is an essential element to innovations, like the electronic health record that will enable us to transform health care. The electronic health record will bridge physical distances, penetrate silos and allow an unprecedented level of communication within health care. The benefits to patients are obvious. Their care will be more informed, more comprehensive and safer. This innovation will allow patients to make a seamless transition along a continuum of care. What we're really talking about, with the vision of an electronic health record, is the idea that no matter where you travel in our province, if you become ill and require the services at an emergency ward, that emergency ward ought to have all the information that pertains to your personal health history. That will save us costs around repetitive tests, but way more importantly it will ensure that our valued health care providers have all of the information available when it comes to my treatment and your treatment. I know that is an important priority. In simple terms, Bill 31 establishes rules for the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information. It will also provide individuals with a legislative right to access and correct their own personal health records.

#### 1850

It's an important bill because health care information is important. Medical information is a vital component of proper, effective health care. A patient's medical history



is, for obvious reasons, crucial in assessing his or her current health, diagnosing illness or prescribing medication.

But personal medical information is also highly personal, perhaps the single most personal and sensitive type of information which exists about us. It is a fundamental part of our personal identity and our very essence as human beings. Simply asking questions or taking tests can raise extremely sensitive issues that we would not want known to employers, clients, colleagues or the public at large.

For reasons which are obvious to all of us, this type of information must be treated with the utmost care and complete respect. Patients must have the right to ask questions, take tests, receive treatment and take medication without fear that this information can in any way compromise their privacy, their dignity, their personal security or their economic well-being.

I'm a gay man. In my community, especially in the earliest days of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, people were very concerned. The government of the day then, led by a health minister—I believe it was Elinor Caplan—made sure that people in my community had access to anonymous testing. It is that kind of principle that we've brought to this bill, to make sure the decisions that are incorporated here in the form of legislation reflect the way a patient would want that dealt with.

Other provinces, as well as the federal government, have implemented health information privacy legislation, but Ontario still lacks clear and comprehensive rules about how medical information should be handled. This bill fills that void and, in doing so, it makes an important contribution to the overall improvement of our health care system.

The general principles which form the foundation of this bill are very easy to grasp. Putting these principles into practice is a complex task, involving difficult, technical and, in some cases, contentious issues. This invaluable and challenging task fell to the members who serve on the standing committee on general government. Their work over the past three months has been exemplary. It has helped us to strengthen, clarify and improve this bill. In fact, notwithstanding the fact that so much work had been done by the previous government and by stakeholder consultation in the interim, the standing committee carried over 100 motions to amend this bill. The speech says "to amend it"; I say "to improve it."

We have gained valuable assistance from the work of the members of that committee. I want to say to the members who serve on that committee, and particularly to committee Chair Jean-Marc Lalonde and Vice-Chair Vic Dhillon, that there's the spirit of non-partisan co-operation. The lack of rancour and the productivity evident in that committee's work is in large measure due to their skilful leadership. I think in large measure it's due to the fact that on an issue as important as this we can demonstrate to the public that no matter what divisions may be there for us in our partisan world, on a matter about people's personal health information, all

sides, all parties in a government reflective of the representation in the Ontario Legislature, can come together.

The public also played an important role in bringing us to where we are today. The public consultations on Bill 31 demonstrated that Ontarians have strong views about these issues, as they should, and the input we received has significantly improved this legislation.

In a few moments my parliamentary assistant, the member from Mississauga East, will describe some of the key areas and improvements and changes that appear in the revised bill, but I'd like to take a moment to highlight a few amendments that resulted from the committee's discussions across the province.

Organizations and hospital foundations told us that requiring patients' express consent for fundraising would adversely affect their ability to raise vital dollars from the community. We listened to their concerns and we acted by agreeing to a balanced solution, one that protects the patient and does not hamper community fundraising. Only a patient's contact information can be disclosed for fundraising purposes, and hospitals can rely on implied consent rather than having to seek the express consent from every single patient. On this point, I'd really like to thank my colleague the member for Ottawa Centre. As an MPP, Richard Patten brings to his work the experiences of having been involved, working for a hospital and helping to raise funds for a hospital. We have made this amendment as an expression of good faith toward our hospitals, which provide so much support to Ontarians. We know that they can be trusted to deal with this most cherished information. Even the knowledge that one has sought treatment is personal information, and we are grateful for the commitments that Ontario's hospitals have made about the way this information will be handled.

The bill can only be effective if it can be effectively enforced. Bill 31 enhances the powers of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and ensures that the commissioner has the support and resources to carry out a strong oversight and enforcement role. The commissioner had concerns about the investigative powers of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We worked with the commission and we addressed those concerns. When I appeared before the standing committee on general government in January of this year as they began to consider this bill, I said that on issues like privacy and confidentiality there is very little room for partisanship. This isn't an ideological issue, it's an issue where there exists broad agreement around basic principles, and I think we've demonstrated that.

Even though she's not with us right now, I really want to recognize the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. Elizabeth Witmer served as Ontario's health minister for some 40 months, and during that time she spent a considerable amount of effort in helping to develop what were the earliest pieces of this legislation. While the legislation she brought forward did not meet with the test of support from all quarters, it has enhanced the efforts that we are able to collectively applaud this evening.



Privacy protection was then the right thing to do, and it's certainly the right thing to do now. These protections are long overdue in Ontario. Let's make sure we get it right, but let's also make sure that we get it done. That's where we're headed.

I'd like to take a few moments to speak in fairly broad terms about what the bill does. Bill 31 would, for the first time ever in Ontario, provide broad legislative protections for the privacy, confidentiality and security of personal health information. Currently, there are no consistent rules covering what information can be collected and how that information can be used and disclosed. Existing laws that deal with health information apply in some health care settings and not in others. This legislation addresses those problems. This legislation begins to treat our health care system as a system, not just parts of it; all parts of it are covered here.

Essentially, Bill 31 gives people the right to have access to their records of personal health information and to require correction of these health records if the information is incomplete or inaccurate. It provides for oversight and enforcement of these rights, and for effective remedies if these rules are broken. The basic rule put forward by this bill is that a patient's consent is required before the patient's personal health information can be collected, used or disclosed. Without express consent, a patient's doctor would be prohibited from disclosing that patient's information for any purpose other than the provision of health care. Without express consent, that doctor, pharmacist or nurse would be prohibited from releasing information to insurance companies or employers. After all, it's not their information; that information belongs to the patient. Within the circle of health care, consent may be implied, unless the individual has expressly instructed otherwise, and in some cases, for example in an emergency, an individual's consent would not be required. Bill 31 also gives patients the right to be informed about how their information is being protected by practitioners and to access their medical records. I think I mentioned twice now that people will have the opportunity not just to access their medical records but to seek changes and corrections.

#### 1900

We all know that any rule is only good if it's enforced. Bill 31 contains very firm but fair penalties for any breaches of the act, penalties which I believe are in appropriate proportion to protection and the need for protection. We said earlier that we firmly believe this is a patient's information. It belongs to a person and it is the most personal information. Therefore, we are providing for fines of \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for organizations that might compromise an individual's information. Also, where the commissioner has made an order or where a person has been convicted of an offence under the act, a person affected may sue for damages. No other provincial health privacy legislation explicitly provides for this. I think it is the right thing to do. If their information has been shared improperly, patients will also have a right to be informed about how to make a

complaint, and how to contact the Information and Privacy Commissioner if their concerns are not promptly addressed.

The federal legislation which came into force in January of this year does not address any of these issues. It deals with the transfer of personal information in the commercial/private sector within the province. It was developed to support electronic commerce. It wasn't developed with the health care system in mind. But our legislation was, first and foremost, developed with the health care system in mind and with the patient's use of the health care system foremost. It applies to doctors and other health care practitioners, hospitals, doctors, long-term-care facilities, health care clinics, laboratories, pharmacies, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and other health-related organizations. It also applies to individuals and organizations outside the health care system, such as insurance companies, employers and schools, with respect to personal health information that they receive from health information custodians.

Let me speak briefly about one more issue which we were extremely sensitive to in drafting this legislation, and that is research. The reality is that the aggregate health information, without name attached, is an incredibly important tool that we utilize in planning for our health care system. So, clearly, patient information is vital to medical research. In most cases, researchers don't need to know the specific identities of individuals in their study. Most research is conducted with information that is completely anonymous. But researchers sometimes require identifiable information in order to link various pieces of data—for example, to study how a disease evolves or to determine the effectiveness of a particular treatment. Patient consent can sometimes be impossible due to the sheer size of the population studies. In these types of situations, researchers must gain approval from a research ethics board before any patient information is disclosed. I believe that these safeguards are adequate and that they would not compromise the vitally important medical research which we all depend upon and benefit from.

The bill before this House is strong. The bill before this House is effective. It would give Ontario the toughest rules and limits on how information is gathered and used. Indeed, I believe it represents the gold standard in health information protection in this country. Officials in my ministry tell me that they have been consulting broadly with other provinces that are depending upon the forward-thinking work that Ontario has been involved in.

This bill is central to our government's plan to change health care because our plan for health care is one which puts the patient first. This is a plan which is supported by the people of this province and which builds upon the health care traditions of our great nation. Patients must come first—not hospitals, not physicians, not pharmaceutical companies, not insurance companies and not the government.

At the end of the day, health care is about people delivering services to people. It is about patients. This



bill sets that out in a clear, balanced way to ensure that patients have a system which is accountable and transparent, a system which respects their rights, their dignity and their privacy. As I said earlier in my remarks, it's time for us to get this done. That opportunity is here today.

I look forward to a principled and thorough debate on this bill. I welcome the input of members on all sides of this chamber. By working together, we can produce legislation that we can all be proud of, legislation which provides a valuable, meaningful and long-overdue service to the people of Ontario. I believe that Bill 31, coming early in the life of a new government, does truly demonstrate the capacity that this legislative chamber has, and all of the members who are sent here to represent their ridings have, when we engage them and the legislative committee in a process that takes advantage of the time, expertise, knowledge and interest of the people who fill the 103 seats that are in this chamber.

I want to close with one personal note. There is a provision in the bill called a lockbox, and it's a provision that perhaps doesn't enjoy universal support, but a lockbox provides that any Ontarian who so wishes to put a square, a box, a lock, a circle around any of their information to prevent its disclosure is entitled to do so.

I think it's critically important, at the end of the day, that the involvement in our health care system of any individual is based on the principle of trust, and I think it's a principle that we must all support, that if any individual Ontarian has information in their health record that they do not want disclosed under any condition whatsoever, that is a right, an entitlement which I personally put into this bill.

I think it's critically important that we make sure that as we move forward, we recognize that if the patient comes first, if we have a health care system that is patient-centred, the patient, at the end of the day, has the right to determine how and when, and frankly, if their personal health information will ever or should ever be disclosed. There's a lockbox provision in this bill, and I'm particularly proud of it.

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm relatively new here and I'm looking for clarification. Is there not a requirement in our rules that there needs to be at least one member of the official opposition?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier):** That's not a point of order. We have a quorum.

Further debate?

**Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland):** I guess, first of all, I want to acknowledge the absence of the fellow from the opposition here tonight. I wonder how much they really care about health care in Ontario and how much it really means to them. But nevertheless, this is an important bill.

First of all, I want to congratulate the minister for taking such a bold step right off the bat as we form this government for the betterment of providing privacy to health care service in Ontario. I think this is a bold move,

and I think what this means for the province of Ontario and Ontarians is it starts to establish a good footing as we move forward with health reform in this province.

I must not forget the minister's PA, who took the lead as we travelled across the province to hear from interested folks. Along with the PA, we had an all-party committee which I was happy to be part of. I also want to acknowledge the staff who did such a great job of putting this bill together as it moved forward.

I'm honoured. This is the first time in my tenure as the MPP for the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West to be part of a committee to deal with public input. It was really gratifying, as we travelled the province, for members from all three parties to hear concerns, the real concerns from the people of Ontario. There were individuals, there were professionals, there were groups, and they had one thing in common: They were very passionate about the way we deliver health care in the province of Ontario and the importance of respecting the privacy that people have. They all spoke, they all brought their concerns, and they were very well taken.

It was great to see that after the consultation process—I'll take a word out of the minister's comments that I had written down. We had roughly 150 amendments, but I think we need to remove the word "amendments" and replace it with the word "improvements," because there were truly improvements. The committee worked very diligently together to try to find the best solution on how we can protect the privacy of the people of Ontario but at the same time have the opportunities to deal with issues that could affect the health of all Ontarians and research and fundraising, as the minister eloquently put it together.

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I guess one of the things that we need to keep reiterating as we debate this bill is the importance—I think it's important, it's vital. People in Ontario have long been ignored when it comes to the privacy of health care. There was no proper process; it was done in a hodge-podge type of scenario. We tried to make the situation fit as best we could. That put professionals at risk, it put people's privacy at risk in Ontario, because there was no proper agenda to follow. I believe we set out the goal for real, positive change to protect privacy. That's what this is all about, because health is one of those things that is very important. I think we all have to respect and understand that.

As I said at the outset, as we travelled the province, we listened. I really believe that all of the concerns that were brought forward were legitimate and they really meant something to the people who brought them forward. I believe there were no hidden agendas and they were all real issues. We're going to create some legislation in the province of Ontario that, bar none, is going to lead Canada in the way we reform and protect the privacy of folks.

This legislation will definitely put some clear rules that professionals, governments and individuals will have to follow, and these will be consistent rules. The rules will be consistent right across the board that we will all



have to follow, and there will be substantial penalties if those rules are not followed. I'm sure that we, as politicians here in this House, and professionals in a trade, whether it's hospital doctors, pharmacists, all those caregivers, are all prepared to come to the table and help us deliver.

There are some existing laws that the federal government brought into play at the beginning of 2004. We heard loud and clear that they weren't the things we needed to hear. It dealt with some issues but, once again, it left the information sector for health care very fragmented. It dealt more with electronic commerce and it certainly did not cover the whole spectrum of privacy.

As I mentioned before, we are going to create some consistent rules, we're going to abide by those rules and we will have that legislation that would make it transparent so that when they're infringed on and they're not delivered properly we have some true recourse in order to deal with those situations.

The minister indicated that there will be stringent regulations that the custodians will have to keep that information and only divulge it as needed, as described by the rules and by legislation. Some of the organizations outside of the health sector that need that information—that information will only be divulged on a needed basis and without all that related information.

It was sort of a contentious issue as we travelled across the province that this bill might hinder the function of fundraising, which is a really big bonus for our health care providers and our hospitals. We live in a province where community involvement is critical to the way we deliver services. As new hospitals are built across the province, as health clinics are built across the province, without the help of those volunteers who raise numerous amounts of money to make sure their communities have the best possible health care—our intent was never to hinder those. So we put some clear guidelines on how we could still address those and yet not abuse the fact that the privacy of people's health records is protected, yet extend that arm that would allow those people to carry on the great work they do.

We would be able, as I said before, to disclose just the necessary information. This would not allow information to be divulged unnecessarily, so the only information that would be let out would deal with those issues. I believe we would all be well looked after.

One of the other issues that was quite clear as we travelled across the province was implementation. I believe that no one who made a presentation—I stand to be corrected—but the majority all supported what we were trying to do. They all felt very strongly about this new legislation. They all wanted it. But one of the concerns in some sectors was that it was fairly comprehensive and they wanted to make sure they got it right the first time, so they needed time to implement it.

The minister had set a very rigorous schedule that we would implement this legislation by July 1, 2004. But we heard over and over again that that would probably make it impossible for some delivery service agencies to

accommodate it with their systems in place. Once again, they wanted to make sure they got it right. They felt very strongly that this was really important and they wanted to get it right the first time. Through the amendment process, our government and our committee certainly recognized that, and one of the amendments was to extend it to January 1, 2005.

Not only did those service delivery folks—whether it was doctors, pharmacists or hospitals—want to get it right, I think our government wants to get it right. I heard over and over again that all parties at one time or another made a great effort to bring legislation to deal with privacy. We finally put it all together, and I think this government recognizes as well that maybe that extra six months will make a great deal of difference on whether we get it right the first time or not. I certainly support that.

One of the things we talked about is that when we pass legislation we always tend to hear that governments of the day seem to have power or give the minister added powers. In this case, the privacy commissioner would be responsible for overseeing any mismanagement of the files, regardless of who had the files. The commissioner will have the sole right to respond to concerns and also to take the bold step to initiate an investigation where they feel that their privacy was infringed.

As we heard the minister mention, we have to make it worthwhile. We need folks to buy in, but at the same time we have to put some meat into the process. We have some penalties. We've heard sometimes that those penalties are harsh, and I am not suggesting they are not harsh in some cases. But I think this government has to lead by example. We have to make sure that people abide by these regulations. The fines that we recommended were \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for organizations. That is a lot of money, but I believe the importance of this bill as we move forward, the impact on Ontarians as far as protecting their rights, their privacy—I believe that it's the right way to go.

I believe that this act is a very important part of our government. It's getting in step and getting in line with the rest of Canada as we try to provide a public health care system across the country. I believe the bill that we are debating here tonight is because of the fact that other provinces across Canada have the same legislation in place. We heard over and over again that we were lagging behind a little, but I believe what we are bringing forward with this bill is even better. We've learned from those other provinces across Canada.

Our staff did an awful lot of research. As ideas were brought forward from public input, we kept on asking, what does another province do? What does New Brunswick do? What does Alberta do? Every time we look into those things, we believed that as the bill goes ahead, we're a step ahead.

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I couldn't stress more the importance of privacy. I'm going to take a bold step and go outside this bill to see how privacy impacts on Ontario, even on other factors of



this great province. Under the former government there were some privacy breaches. I am quoting from the *Toronto Star* of January 11, 2000: "The Mike Harris government had no business releasing the private information to a pollster" of one of our banks.

The same comments were made by other media, and I'll quote. This relates so closely to what we're trying to do to protect privacy with health care. This is a quote from the *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*: "The Privatization Secretariat made a serious administrative error by supplying an Angus Reid executive with a list of the names, addresses, phone numbers and bank balances of every account holder."

The financial information that those people of Ontario had is just as important as health care records. We certainly don't want to go down that track. We need legislation to deal with these issues. We need to put closure to these things. I really believe we're going down the right track.

I will quote another one on the same issue: "The Ontario government committed a major breach of the privacy rights of tens of thousands of Ontario bank depositors." This was from the *Globe and Mail*.

So it's very, very important. We as a government, our leader, made it very clear that we need to be transparent when we put legislation in place.

We talk about dealing with issues behind closed doors. I'll tell you that one of the last kaffuffles that then-Premier Harris tried to do in the last days that he served as leader of the government was to have an order in council, with maybe less than a handful of cabinet ministers, to give a health care break to major sports teams. We just cannot put up with those circumstances. So with dealing behind close doors, those privacy issues are just as important as we deal with the health care privacy legislation.

Just further on how we need to be transparent, to speak on what we believe in, when the Leader of the Opposition became Premier after Premier Harris resigned, somebody just opened the door so that he could take a post. A year later Mr Tilson, after being nice to the Premier, got a really plum job and nobody knew that. It was done behind closed doors. So we cannot act in a vacuum.

The same thing happened when the then government delivered a budget at an auto parts plant. We debated earlier this week about an interim supply motion; I believe it was yesterday. We had some very good debate across the House. I tell you, for a rookie like myself it's a real learning curve. Yet the government of the day, because they didn't come back to this House where business should be conducted, decided under special warrant to spend \$36 billion without discussing it and debating it in this House. I tell you, that's not acceptable to the people.

**Mr McMeekin:** How much was that?

**Mr Rinaldi:** Well, I have \$36 billion—billion, with a "b." I don't even know how many zeros there are in a billion, it's so big.

**Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):** Nine.

**Mr Rinaldi:** Nine? Thank you.

Let me just go back to the health care sector a little bit. I know this is diverging from the bill a little bit, but it's critical. We need to be upfront with this information. In 1995 in the province of Ontario, we had 60 underserved communities. That's a lot of communities. Lo and behold, today we have 122 underserved communities and we're short 569 family physicians.

I come from a rural part of Ontario, and one of the main industries in my community is growing senior citizens. They seem to migrate. That's our main industry. We have a very vibrant retirement community. Although we're only about two hours east of Toronto—most of those people come from the Toronto area—I hear over and over again, "I'm 80 years old and I've got to drive to my doctor in Markham."; "I've got to drive to my doctor in Scarborough." Yet, we've done nothing to alleviate those problems.

At the same time, we destroyed part of our health care system—or the previous government destroyed it. We saw during the SARS episode that we all experienced—it was sad situation, but it's reality. It happens to humans.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** We're going to make it better now.

**Mr Rinaldi:** We are going to make it better.

We were short so many nurses that we ended up paying between \$70 and \$100 per hour for overtime nurses—just not acceptable.

We need to make sure that this bill goes through. I think we worked through it. With all due respect, it was a leaning experience for me to travel the province. It was also very, very interesting that all parties were able to agree on those amendments. So I look for speedy passage of this bill. It's an excellent opportunity.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga East.

**Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East):** I would like to thank Minister Smitherman and my colleague the member from Northumberland for doing such a fantastic job. I'd like to thank the committee members, Jean-Marc Lalonde from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and our Vice-Chair from Brampton West-Mississauga, Vic Dhillon.

It's a great pleasure that I come here today to speak about a bill that the minister has so eloquently talked about. It really transcends all political ideologies and serves to protect and enhance health care for all Ontarians, a goal that I'm sure all of us, as Mr Marchese would say, want to happen here in this province.

Something special happened when we left Queen's Park Circle. As a new MPP and not having been on a committee, as we toured the province, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the member from Nickel Belt, we all came together, as the minister said, to work on this bill and to make it better, to better this bill. I believe it is a great bill for all Ontarians.

Bill 31, the Health Information Protection Act, 2004, will serve not only to protect the privacy of Ontarians'



personal health records, but will lay the foundation for future health care by addressing potential concerns of emerging technologies in health care, such as electronic health records. While Mr Smitherman outlined the legislation and spoke to the need and reasons for this bill, I'd like to focus on the details of the bill, as well as some of the amendments that have been made to it.

The bill is composed of two components, with the first being the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004. Right now, there's a lack of consistent rules in Ontario covering what health information can be collected and how that information can be used and disclosed. Existing laws dealing with health information apply in some health care settings, but not in others. With the advent of online technology and the increased flow of information in the health care system, the need for clear and consistent rules for the privacy and security of personal health information has become more critical than ever.

Before, when we used to get something like a diagnostic done, an X-ray, a CT scan, an MRI, we used to get it in film or in a folder. Today, what's happening is that all that information is being put on digital format, or electronic health, as the minister talked about. With one click, that information, as you know with your emails, can go to many different people. We have to make sure that is well protected. Simply put, public trust is the foundation of our health privacy legislation; it's about trust.

The Personal Health Information Protection Act would apply to the collection, use and disclosure of personal health information by health information custodians. These custodians include hospitals, doctors, other health care providers, as well as the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The act allows health care providers to rely on an individual's implied consent to the collection, use and disclosure of the person's health information if it is needed for health care purposes, but patients must know how that information will be used. That's where the lockbox concept comes in, and this is so important about this bill. This is the right of people to state expressly when their personal information cannot be shared within the circle of health care. The lockbox ensures patients have greater control over the disclosure of their personal health information.

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It's sad to say, but many diseases and illnesses still have a stigma today. When we talk about mental health or HIV, it's the patient, the customer, the person who is receiving that health care who owns that information. If they want to lockbox it—if they want to put a square around it, as the minister said—if they don't want anybody else to see it, that is their prerogative. As well, the act enhances the powers of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to create a strong oversight mechanism. The commissioner will be responsible for overseeing the legislation and ensuring compliance with it.

Minister Smitherman has mentioned the need for people to be able to correct inaccurate personal health infor-

mation. This act will ensure that Ontarians have access to their information and can correct it, when needed. The act enables them to complain to the Information and Privacy Commissioner should their request for access or correction be refused by the custodian of their information. What's more, where the commissioner has made an order or where someone has been convicted of an offence under the act, the person affected by the conduct that gave rise to the order or offence may sue for damages.

**Suing for damages:** The bill has stringent penalties put in. The minister has outlined those penalties. They are very severe. These penalties are fines of \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for organizations convicted of an offence. This is to really reiterate where the minister is going. We are making health care in Ontario customer-focused, patient-focused. The individual is at the centre of the care.

Another aspect of the act is the creation of a secure health data institute, which would be at arm's length from the government. The institute's information practices and privacy protections would be approved by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The institute would receive and analyze information required by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for health system planning and management, knowing that this information is so important to creating a health care system, which we really don't have right now. We have health care, but we have many different silos that have not allowed a system to be created. That system is being created today, and this bill will help in the creation of that system. It would release such information to the ministry in de-identified form, or minimal identifiers could be released to the ministry in certain cases but only as approved by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

The act provides rules for people who are not health information custodians. That includes, for example, insurers and employers who receive personal health information from a doctor or other custodian. Such people or organizations would be restricted as to the use and disclosure of personal health information. Patients must provide their express consent before such organizations or any organization outside that circle of care could be given the information. It is the right thing to do.

Research is critical to improving the health of Ontarians. Bill 31 provides flexibility in allowing research to happen while protecting that sensitive, personal information that we want to make sure stays protected and is used for the right reasons.

In most cases, research is conducted with anonymous information, but in some cases researchers do require identifiable information to link various pieces of data. In situations where consent cannot be obtained, the act says researchers must have the approval of a research ethics board before a health information custodian may disclose the information to the researcher.

As everybody in this House and those listening today can see, many checks and balances have been brought into this bill. An example of such an instance could be



the research on large populations of patients where the researcher has no contact with the patient and it would be difficult or prohibitive to seek consent of the patient regarding the use and disclosure of that information.

In the second component of Bill 31, which is the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2003, our government is well aware of the need for health care professionals to share information and hold open discussions that can lead to improved care and safety. This bill is not about handcuffing somebody and stopping us from receiving the best care; it's about trust, checks and balances, and making sure that it is patient-centred, and that they are getting the best care possible in the most secure manner.

Our government is well aware of the need that health care professionals have to share this information. That's why we drafted Bill 31 with protections for quality of care information in quality of care committees. This is particularly critical when a medical error occurs in a hospital or in a health care setting. Accidents and things do happen; mistakes happen. They have to be taken care of and you have to look at the root cause, what was the process, the procedure, and what took place. That information provided to the quality of care committee and the opinions of committee members would be shielded from disclosure in legal proceedings. This is to make sure they can have an open forum where they can discuss these quality issues that are taking place in health care, thus creating an open and free dialogue between health care professionals that would serve to enhance patient care and safety.

As has been reiterated by the minister and the member for Northumberland, this is about the patient. We are always focusing on the patient, not around the silos, not around all the providers, but always centred on the patient. If we continue to do that and go down that path, our health care system will be second to none. However, this protection must be balanced with the need for patients to know the facts surrounding their file. As a result of this, the protection of quality of care information has been limited so that it doesn't permit the shielding of facts relating to the incident itself. The protection ensures a careful balance between the need to promote quality care and the need to ensure accountability.

Some of the key amendments came out as we criss-crossed the province and listened to all the stakeholders—and I say this in a non-partisan way, with the member for Nickel Belt, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and everybody participating to make this bill the strongest bill, to make it the best for all Ontarians.

Let me highlight some of those key amendments. First of all, as we've noted, health care stakeholders have been very supportive of our decision to move forward with health information privacy legislation. What was brought down by the federal government was really around e-commerce and did not focus on health care. This bill has brought health care as the main focus to it, and looked at, once again, making sure that the patient is at the centre.

However, it does not mean the bill has not been without its critics or that there have been no concerns around Bill 31. Having had the distinct pleasure of serving on the committee and looking at Bill 31, I, along with my fellow committee members, were able to hear from numerous groups and associations. The submissions they presented to the committee have helped us make several improvements to the bill from its original drafting, changes that helped make the bill before us today a better and more effective tool by which to protect Ontarians' privacy and ensure the continued provision of quality health care that has become the hallmark of our province.

I want to thank our stakeholders for their advice and valuable work on this initiative. Many stakeholders such as the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health expressed concern that the proposed July 1, 2004, time frame would not give them enough time to prepare for the legislation coming into force. The minister reiterated it and the member from Northumberland spoke about it. So what did we do? We moved that date. That was actually put through with a motion, and I will say from a motion from the opposition, that helped bring that forward. I believe it was the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. As we toured the province, this was a great experience. It was so non-partisan.

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The date has been moved to January 1, 2005, to ensure plenty of time to implement the legislation. While we recognize the need to implement this bill as quickly as possible, we also recognize the need to work with the various stakeholders to ensure that they are ready and able to comply with Bill 31. That is acting responsibly.

Another amendment is based on feedback from stakeholders such as the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ontario Hospital Association and the hospital foundations concerning the fundraising provisions in Bill 31. Much talk happened over this in regard to the fundraising. Provisions were made. The provisions have been expanded to permit health information custodians to use and disclose limited personal information about a patient for fundraising purposes where it has the implied consent of the patient. However, this information is limited to the patient's name and contact information only. You may be getting a call or receiving a letter from a foundation, but that is all the information they would have. They would be able to have your name and your contact information, and that would be it.

This change strikes a balance between the valuable work that the organizations like hospital foundations are doing in raising the much-needed money for the health care sector, and the right of the people to control how their information is collected, used and disclosed. This will ensure the transparency we need.

Another amendment is based on feedback from the health professionals' colleges that regulate Ontario's doctors and nurses and other health care professionals. This amendment extends the type of protections provided by the Quality of Care Information Protection Act to the college's quality assurance programs. This change will



help the colleges in their mandates to protect the public and it will ensure accountability. Furthermore, clarification was made to specify that nothing in Bill 31 will interfere with the regulatory activities of the colleges under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. The College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, or the board, under the Drugless Practitioners Act—this will ensure clarity.

Another amendment relates to the investigative powers of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. As they presented to us in committee, we listened and made sure that all the stakeholders had a say and were able to come back and were given their time. The right questions were asked. They were open-ended questions, questions toward always bettering this bill. This is a fantastic bill for all Ontarians that we all should be very proud of.

Another amendment was that we worked with the commission to address the commissioner's concerns, and the commissioner, in a very open dialogue with the minister, was able to feel that there was a partnership, working together on behalf of the patient—always focused on the patient. This is probably one of the proudest moments that the committee had, that our focus always centred on the patient, the 12 million Ontarians who get health services every day. That is our focus. If we don't lose sight of that focus, we will always be on the right track. These changes have given the commissioner the tools she needs and the clear direction needed to allow her to fulfill her duties.

Our government is proud of Bill 31 and we're pleased with this revised version of the bill. We're also pleased to have had the opportunity of working closely with our health care partners and with the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We look forward to continued work with our partners to ensure that Ontarians are the healthiest people in Canada. When we say that, sometimes we think of health care. Right now, many times, we have sick care. We want to make sure that we bring it to health care. Let's look at getting health care to the patient at the right time, at the right place, when they need it.

I look forward to continued work with our partners to ensure that Ontarians are the healthiest people. I am convinced that Bill 31 best serves Ontarians. It serves the needs of patients and health care providers by providing a clear picture, a consistent picture, one that has rules for collecting, using, storing and sharing personal health information. This bill provides clarity, direction, transparency and accountability, and these are all the things that Ontarians deserve from their government. We are committed to delivering them every day, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. We are here to focus on 12 million people in this province so they get value for their dollar and they know that they can trust a government that is looking after their interests as the taxpayers of this province. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** It's a pleasure to be here this evening to make a few comments on Bill 31. I'm looking forward to the comments from my col-

league the former Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer. I'm listening to the comments and questions and I'm listening to the debate, but I can tell you that my former minister, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer at the time, introduced much of this bill. We will look forward to how much you want to amend this bill and how much you want to change it. That's how I'll decide whether or not I'll vote on it.

I do want to say at this time that I'm so pleased that Minister Witmer was elected as the member for Waterloo in the last election and she is now back as the critic for the health and long-term care ministry. She has so much to offer. I can tell you, for you members on the opposite side, it would really pay you to listen to a lot of the advice she gives, particularly to Minister Smitherman, because she has come through with a lot of very positive things for the health care field in the province of Ontario.

I've said this a number of times to Elizabeth, but I want to say again how much her expertise means to me. When I was elected in 1999, I came in as someone with a potential hospital redevelopment project in front of me in the city of Orillia. It had been going on for 14 or 15 years. You guys have all heard about the hospital expansions and redevelopments and what they mean to communities. I'll tell you, without Elizabeth Witmer, it would not have happened. She played a very, very important role in initially announcing the money. You know, guys, no matter what party you're from, you've got to be happy to see a new hospital in the province. Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital has a fantastic new redevelopment program, and I say thank you to Elizabeth Witmer for doing that.

**Mr Marchese:** I just want to say for the record that New Democrats are going to support Bill 31. I say this because we are so unfairly criticized, because people on that side say that all New Democrats do is simply criticize and oppose, and it's not true. It is true that often we are very critical of the government and we do that as cogently as we can because that's our job. But there are times when the government will do things that we will agree with and, in this case, we are going to agree.

Unlike Bill 8, the bill called the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which in my view competes with, seems to emulate or wants to exceed the totalitarian aspects of Bill 26, the same bill—and some of you rump folks don't know this. The Ontario Health Services Restructuring Commission—you remember, some of you old-timers, how we attacked Bill 26 for being one of the most totalitarian bills we had ever seen. We are saying Bill 8 competes with, seems to emulate or wants to exceed that totalitarian aspect of Bill 26. So with that bill we have strong disagreements. Our health critic, from Nickel Belt, has already made a case against it; we'll do so tomorrow night at around a quarter to 7. Please stay tuned. She will be speaking to this bill at approximately 9 o'clock, and by "she," I mean my colleague from Nickel Belt. So please tune in.



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**Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore):** I feel I should start my comments by welcoming the viewers at home, as my colleague has across the way.

I'm very pleased to stand tonight and speak to Bill 31, An Act to enact and amend various acts with respect to the protection of health care information.

In the opportunities over the last several months to travel across the province and speak to Ontarians about what they want their government to do, the residents of the community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, which I represent, and those across the province gave us some messages. Those messages were very loud and clear and are supported by our action in this legislation. They told us to put patients first, to put patients in charge of their medical records and put them in charge of their personal information. Bill 31 does just that. They also told us to acknowledge that there is only one patient traveling through a health care system that at times doesn't operate as a holistic system, where one arm doesn't speak to the other. The opportunities that are provided to us by Bill 31 to treat the health care system as the system it is, is a positive change and will be viewed as such by Ontarians.

They also want us to bring health care into the next century, to take advantage of technological advances that we've seen over the last number of years, so that information can travel with patients and we can ensure that the information needed by our medical practitioners, whether they are across the road or across the province, can be brought with them by patients. Bill 31 gives us an opportunity to move in that direction. It gives us an opportunity for the better management of patient information, which will allow for an improvement of the health care system. Ontarians said loud and clear when we had an opportunity to speak to them over the last number of months that that is what they wanted us to do. So it's a proud moment as we deal with Bill 31 here in the Legislature.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments? The member has two minutes to respond.

**Mr Fonseca:** I must be feeling a circle of love here today which I have not experienced yet. But to see all the members—

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I didn't speak yet.

**Mr Fonseca:** The member for Nickel Belt—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Mississauga East, I just wanted to tell you, don't let her intimidate you. You have the floor.

**Mr Fonseca:** I can say that everybody must be having a great evening and I can see that this bill is directed at all of us. It is non-partisan and patient-centred. It is making sure we get the best quality health care for everybody in Ontario. It is protecting those it should protect: the patient, the customer. It addresses so many issues that so many stakeholders and groups have been waiting for and longing to be addressed. We experienced that as we were able to travel throughout the province—to the north, to the west, to the east. As we did that, the stakeholders came forth. It wasn't about slamming the bill, it was

about improving it. That's what we're feeling here. It's about improvement, it's about making health care work for all Ontarians. That is the focus. This bill will be seen as a shining star for all Ontarians. Mr. Speaker, like I said, I feel the love.

**Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo):** I do appreciate the opportunity to join the debate on Bill 31, the Health Information Protection Act. I want to thank the Minister of Health for his kind comments earlier this evening.

This is a bill that has been a long time in the making. Our government recognized the need to put in place such a bill. We knew it was very important that we put in place a bill that was going to protect patient information, that was going to make sure that the use of that information was only done properly, in a way that it protected the individual, and people needed to know how and when that information was going to be disclosed. So we now have for the first time ever, upon the passage of this bill, a bill that will establish some very consistent and comprehensive rules and safeguards for the protection of that personal information.

I think the fact that this bill has taken so long to get to where we are today speaks to the fact that there is nothing more important in life than the protection of personal health information to individuals. In the development of this bill, and I think this is probably the third or fourth iteration of this bill, we continued to hear from individuals, professional associations, health providers and colleges about the concerns they had with the bill.

I think it's important that governments have worked to get it right, and I do want to express my appreciation at the outset to the minister and his staff. I think they have undertaken very comprehensive consultations with the stakeholders, and I think we're at a point where there is almost unanimous agreement on the bill. Obviously, any concerns that remain are around issues such as the lock-box, the implementation and the regulations. I hope that the minister and the ministry staff will continue to consult with all of the stakeholders in the province, as they have been doing, in order that people can be fully assured that when the bill finally becomes law on January 1, 2005, we've had the consultations that will make it the best bill it can possibly be.

I think this is an example of what we can do when we all work together. This is a very non-partisan bill. This bill is to protect people. It's to give people access to their own personal health information. It allows them to make changes if changes are necessary. So it is very patient-centred, and I'm glad we're finally where we are today.

It's a very technical bill, and although there was a lot of consultation—we had input from individuals, health professionals, health care providers and others—I think most of the general public would be unaware that this bill was even under discussion. So we're here today, and I think at the end of the day everyone is going to support this bill. Certainly it will be to the benefit of the people in Ontario because it will allow for the protection of their personal health information.



Having said that, I want to also draw the comparison between Bill 31, which I do believe got full consultation and full debate—and I do believe that the government was responsive to the concerns that were expressed, and appropriate changes were made. They certainly incorporated some of the amendments that the opposition parties introduced, and we're grateful for that. I hope that in the same way the government will see fit to make amendments to Bill 8, because regrettably on Bill 8, which of course is another health act, although there was consultation, there are still many, many concerns being expressed by health care providers who are going to be impacted by the provisions contained in Bill 8.

**2000**

There are some fundamental concerns about the issue of accountability. Accountability is the principle of Bill 8. I know the government often talks about Roy Romanow and what he said. He talks about accountability, and he talks about accountability going two ways. It goes to the government, to the minister, to the ministry and to the health providers. Regrettably, Bill 8 does not speak to mutual accountability. It doesn't hold the government accountable for their actions. It doesn't hold them accountable for making sure that people have access to health care services and programs in Ontario. All the accountability goes one way.

This issue of access to services is extremely important, and we heard that today. We've heard this government say that Bill 8 is going to eliminate two-tier health care. I would submit to you that Bill 8 isn't going to do that. Bill 31 doesn't do that either. We had with us here today the Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada. They talked about the need for all children in this province to have access to a vaccine which could prevent meningitis. I hope that this government will introduce this vaccine, because meningitis today is a vaccine-preventable disease.

The reason I mention that is because right now we have two-tier medicine in this province when it comes to the vaccine that is currently available to treat people and prevent them from getting meningitis. At the present time, if you have the money, which can be \$600 to \$800 per child, you can have your child vaccinated. If you don't have the money, you don't have access to the vaccine. Yet at the present time British Columbia, Alberta and Nunavut all provide equal access to the meningitis vaccine. So I hope this government will move forward very quickly. When we talk about two-tier medicine and getting rid of it, it means that the government is going to have to provide the access, and so far we didn't have this vaccine readily available for every child in Ontario. Yet, do you know that it was made universally available to every child in the United States in 1998 and 1999? We need to make sure that we would introduce this as quickly as possible and that it would become part of the vaccination schedule. I understand that the government wants to move in this direction and I trust that they will. They have certainly talked about making sure that we improve access to health care.

As we move forward and we take a look at what we heard during the committee hearings and what were some of the recurring themes of interest, of concern, I want to draw the attention of this House, and to those watching, to some of those issues. One of the issues that was raised was the extensive regulation-making powers of the government. There were issues around fundraising. There are issues around the lockbox. I understand that some of those issues around the lockbox still remain as issues that are outstanding, and of course there were other issues that I will bring forward as well.

I want to deal first with the extensive regulation-making powers that Bill 31 confers to the government. Again, as I said at the outset, I hope the government will undertake the same type of consultation on the regulations as they did on the bill, and not only listen but also implement and include some of the recommendations.

The Ontario Medical Association, when they spoke to the extensive regulation-making powers, said: "I would like to note for this committee, however, our concerns about the extensive regulation-making powers found in the bill. They are so wide-ranging that they allow the government to change virtually any aspect of the law by regulation. This is contrary to the traditional division of legislative and regulatory authority and represents an intrusion of the government's executive powers into the lawful powers of the Legislature. Not only does it create the power to completely undermine the content of the act, it undermines the democratic process of the Legislature. We recommend that this committee review the proposed regulatory-making powers closely with a view to significantly curtailing them."

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Elgin branch, had similar concerns. They said: "The regulation-making authority under this legislation is expansive and affects every aspect of the legislation. ...it is overly broad and would, in our opinion, undermine the legislative intent."

So I think it's important that the government keep that in mind and certainly that they move forward in the development of the regulations in a very collaborative manner, and also that the approach be transparent.

One of the other key issues raised was fundraising. I know amendments have been made, but certainly many of the hospitals that came before the committee expressed concerns about their ability to fundraise. In this province today, most of the new hospitals, or the additions or renovations we're making to hospitals, happen because of fundraising. There simply are not enough taxpayer dollars to pay for the bricks and mortar, so fundraising is absolutely critical and we're certainly pleased. But these were some of the concerns.

We heard from the University Health Network: "To ensure ... funds, University Health Network cannot support an express consent requirement for the collection, use and disclosure of personal, non-health, demographic information for fundraising purposes."

We also heard from the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy in Canada, who said: "However, we are extremely concerned about an express consent requirement



in Bill 31 for health care fundraising purposes. We feel this requirement is inappropriate for five reasons and, therefore, we are requesting that the government consider an implied consent requirement for health care fundraising, to be achieved through notice and opt-out." I think it's important to bring these points forward.

We also heard from the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital Foundation, who said: "When we talk about grateful patient programs and the return on investment, I want to talk to you a bit about the cost of fundraising. I'm sure many of you have been involved in your hospitals. The cost of fundraising is of constant concern to the community, professional development staff and to our volunteer boards...."

"I wanted to also provide you with a bit of accountability on hospital foundations. This is taken from the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy's recent publication on charitable fundraising in Canada: 'Hospital boards are more frequently reported to be involved in almost all evaluation activities than are the boards of other types of charities.' What this, I'm hoping, is telling you is that we have to make sure our costs are reasonable and in line and that hospital boards are very diligent in ensuring that."

So again, the boards have indicated, and evidence shows, they are very accountable in their fundraising, and of course there's a desperate need for the money that is raised for these additions, renovations and new construction.

**2010**

I also want to bring to your attention a point that was made by the Ontario Hospital Association to the standing committee on justice and social policy. They say, "MPPs in this province," referring to all 103, "You are aware that the hospitals in your home communities and across your large ridings are governed by dedicated, voluntary boards. The members of these boards are community leaders, business people and others with a civic orientation to community service. Many of you will know them as your neighbours and friends. These people are entrusted with the oversight, fiscal stewardship, mission and strategic direction of their hospital, with a single purpose in mind, and that is to create healthier communities."

So this whole issue of fundraising is really extremely important. We have in this province today, new MRI's; we have new units for children, paediatric units; we have new birthing; we have cardiac care centres; we have cancer centres. There's new equipment in our hospitals today. That equipment and those new structures would not be there without the generous donations of many, many people in our local communities. This happens because of our boards and our foundations, who work so hard to raise the money to provide the needed services.

That gets us back to access. If we're going to improve the access to care, we're going to have to continue to make sure that we have these additional structures. Whether it's more cardiac care centres, more cancer centres, more dialysis centres, this is absolutely necessary.

We're going to have to expand what we do in the way of treating people who have diabetes.

Now, one of the other issues of concern in Bill 31—I know the government has certainly tried to address it, and I think it would be difficult to actually reach total unanimous agreement on this issue—is the issue of the lock box, and also the time required to implement it and the whole process of implementation. It is a very complex, sensitive issue, and I think there is some concern among some of the health care providers that it's not going to be possible to have the systems required by the legislation in place by the date of implementation. So one of the suggestions I would make to the minister regarding the implementation of the lock box provision is that he may consider staggering its implementation over a period of time.

I just want to quote from a concern that has been expressed from the Ontario Hospital Association. "Secondly, the issue of the lock box: While we appreciate the need to ensure patients have an opportunity to control their personal health information, we do feel it's important to alert government as to how this may impact the quality of patient care in Ontario."

For many health care practitioners working within hospitals, the right of individuals to effectively block access to what may be very pertinent health information could pose real challenges. Hospitals have told us that such a provision may in some instances seriously impair the ability of a health care provider to disclose information for purposes that may be essential to the effective delivery of health care and may thus, inadvertently, undermine the quality and safety of care to that individual."

So we need to make sure that issue is completely resolved, because at no time do we want to undermine the quality and safety of care that is provided to any individual. Again, I would recommend that the government perhaps take a look at staggering the implementation of the lock box requirement to insure that it is implemented without any disruption or posing any risk to patient safety.

I'd like to now look at the whole issue of accountability. Within Bill 31 are 10 principles. Again, the first principle identified was accountability. I can't help but think of Bill 8 when I think of accountability, because accountability is also the cornerstone of Bill 8. Regrettably, within Bill 8, when we talk about accountability, the accountability goes all one way. The accountability applies to the health providers. Regrettably, it's not mutual accountability. I think we need to keep that in mind. There isn't an obligation on the part of the ministry or the minister of the government in the area of accountability.

In fact, Bill 8 is totally silent as to the government's obligations with respect to its support for the provision of health care or that it has even achieved the best use of public resources. Of course, when we talk about public resources, we are talking about the taxpayers' money. I do believe it is important that the government be account-



able for the use and be able to demonstrate to the taxpayers, just as the hospitals, the long-term-care facilities or any other health care provider are going to have to do, that they have made the best use of the public resources provided to them. I do believe that the government also should have the same obligation.

I know many people in this province are extremely disappointed that, on the issue of accountability, Bill 8 is totally silent on the government's obligations. If Bill 8 were to undergo some further amendments, which I trust and hope it will, it has to make explicit the mutual accountability of the government and providers and it certainly has to ensure the accountability of the government to the public for the best use of their tax dollars.

The rules need to be clear to all of the parties involved in these accountability agreements. I would just repeat one more time: If we're going to hold the hospitals accountable for the use of the money that they get from taxpayers and if they're going to be required to deliver a certain level of care and quality of care, which they already do today, by the way, then the government also needs to assume similar responsibility for funding the health care providers in order that they can provide that level and quality of care.

It might interest this House and people watching to know that Bill 8, unlike the Canada Health Act, makes absolutely no reference to funding the system adequately. If we're going to meet the health needs of Ontarians through comprehensive, accessible and high quality health care services, it is important that there be mutual accountability. If hospitals are going to be required to be accountable for the money, the services, the programs they provide, then they also have to know in a very timely manner what level of government funding they're going to be receiving and they're going to have to know that about three years out.

Accountability agreements are a key principle of this bill. They were a cornerstone of Bill 8. Again, I hope that the government will take a look at Bill 8. I hope that if they're going to force hospitals to sign performance agreements, they will also take a look at mutual accountability and making sure there are obligations on the government.

This government has repeatedly told us they want to be an open government. They want transparency and accountability. I hope that within Bill 8 we will see that. I hope we won't see what we see in Bill 8 today, and that is the one-sidedness.

I would also hasten to add that Bill 31, of course, was introduced after Bill 8. I don't know if the members remember, but Bill 8 was introduced in a way that gave the minister unprecedented, far-reaching powers of a like that we have never seen in this province before. And then the government hastily introduced Bill 31 because I think they realized they had breached the privacy rights of individuals in the province of Ontario. However, I would just remind the Speaker that Bill 8 continues to have far-reaching powers and certainly we really need to address that particular issue.

2020

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Speaker would remind the member for Kitchener-Waterloo that we are speaking about Bill 31 and I would just ask that you stick to that.

**Mrs Witmer:** Yes, Mr Speaker. There are similarities. As I say, if you take a look at Bill 31, it actually supersedes some of the parts of Bill 8 because of the fact that Bill 8 did contain some breaches of privacy rights and actually allowed the Minister of Health to collect, use and disclose personal information, and so the Ministry of Health has made corrections.

Let's take a look now at the issue of limited disclosure. This was an issue for some of the stakeholders who came before the committee on Bill 31. We had the Anglican, the Evangelical Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches in Ontario come before us, and they wanted to make sure that chaplains and spiritual caregivers would continue to have access to patients to provide religious services. And certainly that amendment has been made. But they wanted to make sure that they could continue to do the work that they had been doing in the past and that no one in an institution, a hospital, would be denied access to their clergyperson or their spiritual caregiver.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information, CIHI, and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, ICES, also came before us and spoke to us about the issue of data agents. That was another issue of concern. Those same two institutions, as well as the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ontario Council of Teaching Hospitals and the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care, talked to us about the issue of disclosure outside of the province of Ontario.

We also had some concerned stakeholders who came to give us recommendations to deal with access to health cards and health numbers; for example, the Cardiac Care Network and the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

We had stakeholders who appeared before the committee who wanted additions to health information custodians. We had Cancer Care Ontario, the Cardiac Care Network of Ontario and the Ontario Joint Replacement Registry appear as well.

I want to go back to the issue of hospital fundraising, because I think this was certainly the issue we heard the most about. We had so many, many interested and concerned stakeholders. I would just mention a few: the University Health Network, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Ontario Council of Teaching Hospitals, the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care, St Michael's Hospital and the Ontario Association of CCACs. As we've heard, the concerns of these stakeholders have certainly been addressed.

Just to give you some information about some of the stakeholding done in the province of Ontario, the University Health Network told us that their foundation raised \$62 million in 2003. This accounts for over 12% of the approximately \$500 million raised annually by all Ontario hospital foundations. I think that's an indication as to the amount of money that is raised. That's half a billion dollars raised every year in this province. If we



had to raise that money through taxes, it would certainly be a difficult challenge.

The University Health Network goes on to state that the charitable donations they receive are used on new health care facilities and on new medical technologies and equipment that reduce inefficiencies and waiting times in the Ontario health care system. It's used for new medical research, which results in improved clinical outcomes. So I think we can see that this fundraising is totally devoted to improving access to care for people in the province of Ontario, and also improving their clinical outcomes, which is extremely important—anything we can do to improve health outcomes.

They also shared with us that 43% of the donations in their current campaign were received directly from current or former patients or from individuals who had a family member who received services at the hospital. This again speaks to the fact that people in the province of Ontario do recognize that we have a good health system in this province and, by working together, we can continue to make it even better. They go on to say that in 2003, the Toronto General and Western Hospital Foundation received donations of \$374,000-plus from grateful patients and, of that number, \$308,000-plus went to the research fund. So again, a lot is happening. It's happening on behalf of patients improving patient outcomes.

If we take a look at this whole issue of philanthropy, which of course fundraising is all about, we heard from the Ontario members of AHP Canada that, again, they raised over \$500 million on behalf of the province's 225 public hospitals. They also stressed that the money was spent on new health care facilities, medical equipment and technologies that reduced waiting times and improved efficiencies in the health care system. The money was spent on health research. Now, this health research that is undertaken by these fundraising dollars provides for tomorrow's life-saving drugs and therapies such as the vaccine—I'm sure I talked to you about this earlier—that is now available to prevent meningitis.

So this is how the money is spent. It's also spent in new programs for patient safety and infection prevention and control, required to support our health care workers after the devastating effects of SARS. I think we can all appreciate the fact that philanthropy fundraising is being used to help people in the province of Ontario.

We also know that over the next 10 years, the next decade, the public health care system is going to require a lot more money, and it is unlikely that the federal and provincial governments are going to be able to finance this solely through the tax dollars they collect. In fact, the Romanow report estimates that health care reforms over the next decade are going to cost nearly \$15 billion between now and 2006. So I think we're going to see that fundraising is going to play an increasingly critical new role in supporting those reforms, in supporting research into communicable diseases and, of course, the construction of isolation facilities such as those we saw following the SARS epidemic.

## 2030

I would tell you as well that at St Michael's Hospital over the past three years, that foundation has raised close to \$40 million for projects to support patient care. Hospital foundations in this province do play a very integral role in raising funds for equipment and facilities that enhance and improve patient care, patient outcome and patient access. So I'm very pleased that the government has moved forward and responded to some of the concerns about fundraising.

One of the other issues that continues to be of some concern to those who appeared before the committee, such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the OMA, the OHA, the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association, who were here this evening, the Ontario Association of CCACs and the Ontario Council of Teaching Hospitals, to name but a few, was the concern around the issue of implementation. This bill was originally going to become law on July 1. I'm pleased to say that the government did listen to the concern that that timeline was unrealistic and I'm pleased to see that the motion we put forward was approved and the new implementation date is going to be January 1, 2005. We hope that will allow for as smooth a transition as possible.

People were quite concerned about the need to educate and train those people who were going to be in contact and be responsible for Bill 31. They were going to need more time to make their associations compliant internally with the legislation. They were also going to need time to hold extensive consultations prior to establishing the regulations with, of course, the minister. Again, I would just encourage the minister to listen, as he has on this bill. So there was certainly a need for more time.

The people from the addiction and mental health centre said, "We recommended an extension of time to bring this into force ... to allow for those implementation issues to be worked out, and in particular to allow for consultation with stakeholders by the ministry and the government to develop regulations and to develop templates and materials that will be helpful to people." They also went on to say, "July 1 is just unrealistic. I think six months is a lot better," and they say, "There may still need to be some staged implementation." The Canadian Mental Health Association told us, "we would certainly support some extension of the time for implementation." The OHA indicated:

"We are also very concerned about the implementation date of July 1 and would strongly urge the committee to consider extending this date to a date no earlier than six months following the passage of Bill 31 and the filing of the regulations. This will allow health care providers an opportunity to ensure compliance with both the more general provisions of Bill 31 and the numerous specific regulatory requirements contemplated by the legislation."

We also heard from some of our stakeholders about the information manager designation issues. We heard again from CIHI and the Smart Systems for Health



Agency. We've talked a lot about the fact that the whole issue of the lockbox continues to be of concern to people even today, despite the amendments. Again, I do believe it is such a highly sensitive issue that I don't think we're ever going to have total unanimity on the bill. Our government and this government worked extremely hard to be responsive to the concerns. Certainly, if there's anything else that remains that can be done, we need to do that.

But we heard from the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care, St Michael's Hospital, the OHA, the OMA, the University Health Network, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the Canadian Mental Health Association. Everybody was trying to strike that balance between an individual's privacy rights and the need for the caregiver to deliver treatment without limitations. People were looking for a compromise that would allow health care providers the access they need to patient information when there is, for example, an emergency situation, an issue of infection control or quality of care.

We heard concerns, particularly from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. They inquired about the effects of wide-open information sharing on the stigma—and the discrimination would be against their patients. This whole issue of the lockbox is delicate and sensitive. I guess I would quote the OHA, who say there are safety issues to consider:

“For many health care practitioners working within hospitals, the right of individuals to effectively block access to what may be ... pertinent personal health information” poses significant challenges, and that such a provision impairs “the ability of a health care provider to disclose information for purposes that may be essential to the effective delivery of health care, and may thus inadvertently undermine the quality and safety of care to that individual,” resulting in adverse drug reactions and increased potential for a misdiagnosis and an increased number of unnecessary medical tests and interventions as a result of incomplete medical records. These are some of the concerns that you need to balance with some of the other concerns that were heard.

From St. Michael's Hospital we heard that in an emergency or urgent care situation, the inability of caregivers to access all relevant information may seriously affect outcomes. For example, a question to be asked: Is that patient taking certain medications, which may interact with drugs about to be administered? And from the OMA we heard that physicians are concerned about the notion of the lockbox but appreciate the addition of the flag so that at least they know when they are receiving incomplete information. Their issues are in terms of when physicians are asked about the health of a patient in an emergency situation, particularly when a physician is called in his office, yet there is a disclosure denial by the patient, who wishes that certain information be kept. So again, there's a delicate balance that must be maintained, but uppermost in our mind always has to be the quality of the health care provided and the safety of the individual.

I've tried to review some of the significant concerns that have been brought to our attention by the people in this province. I think that, at the end of the day, there is almost unanimous support for the bill. We will certainly be supporting this bill. We started work on this bill, it seems, many, many years ago. This government and the present government have all had the opportunity to make the bill better and I think we're at a point where we've accomplished that.

I think the key right now is going to be the issue of implementation. I hope the government will continue to consult with those who have an interest and are going to be impacted by the legislation. A lot of work will need to be done on the regulations to make sure they support the legislation. Hopefully, they will also provide some financial resources. That's something I haven't mentioned, but I think it is important to bring to your attention, Mr Speaker, and the government's attention, that the implementation of this bill will not be cheap. There are systems to set up. There is a comprehensive education program that must be put in place to make sure that everyone who is required to comply with Bill 31 and has interaction with the legislation understands fully their responsibilities. So the key now will be for the government to get the implementation right.

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I'll maybe just end my comments by taking a look at the issue of implementation. I'll speak to how this is going to impact the hospitals in the province of Ontario because they probably are going to have more work to do than almost anybody else; certainly other organizations are going to have to undertake a lot of work, too.

The health care providers are going to have to develop very comprehensive privacy programs. The new legislation sets out some very detailed standards, so all of the health care providers are now going to have to develop new policies and new practices. They will also be looking for the government to be developing some guidelines, some templates, some audit tools for the stakeholders and the organizations that are affected by the legislation. They are also going to be looking for the government to put in place and provide pamphlets and posters for dissemination by the providers to the public. We do have a responsibility to make the public aware of this new piece of legislation, because certainly they have the power to access the information and to make corrections to the information.

I know that a lot of work has been done by various organizations already. In fact, the OHA has recently produced a document entitled *Managing Privacy, Data Protection and Security for Ontario Hospitals*. Certainly we're going to have to ensure that there are hospital templates and guidelines. We're going to have to create standardization throughout all sectors. People are going to be looking to the government for support and guidance. Certainly people are looking to the government to provide the tools that are tailored to meet the needs of the different organizations. They're going to need a lot of help, and the government needs to keep in mind the cost.



There are going to be new requirements on the part of the health care providers and associations and organizations, new costs related to information practices, obtaining consent, the rights of patients to access and correct their health records and the standards for electronic records, to name but a few. These are all going to have financial implications for hospitals. So, again, the government needs to keep in mind that there is a financial cost involved as well.

I appreciate the time that so many people in this province took to speak to the bill. I appreciate the co-operative manner in which all three parties worked to ensure that the bill could be amended and changes made. I hope some of the additional concerns will be corrected and amended. I know that some of the stakeholders have been reassured that further amendments are going to be made; I hope the government will do so.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Marchese:** I just want to say a few words about the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. I want to say how much I appreciate her contribution, and I want to say that I appreciate her contribution much more in her opposition role than I did when she was in government; I do. She is hard-working, she is thoughtful, capable of seeing both sides—something that she couldn't see when she was in government. It's really wonderful to see that in opposition. I wanted to say that.

I also want to say of my colleague from Nickel Belt, who will be speaking at approximately 9 o'clock this evening, for those of you who are watching, that Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, is an incredible member. She is the health critic, and she does much of the research, as most of us do, without any help or little help, unlike many Liberals. Most ministers have anywhere from nine to about 15 staff to help them out with their research and communications, legislative assistants and all that. We have probably one for the whole caucus, a couple of members for the whole caucus, and we do incredibly well.

**Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West):** But you're bright.

**Mr Marchese:** We are not brighter than you; no, we're not. Don't say that. One of the members says we are bright, and it's not true. I believe many of you are equally bright.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Speaker feels a little left out of the conversation.

**Mr Marchese:** I beg your pardon, Speaker.

I just want to say that the member from Nickel Belt, our critic, who will be supporting the bill but expressing some of the concerns that she has gleaned from her study of it, including what other members said, will be speaking at approximately 9 o'clock. Please tune in.

**Ms Wynne:** Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo's comments. I also want to talk about the process of being on this committee. This was the first time that I travelled with a committee to hear the delegations on Bill 31. I have to say, having been many times on the opposite side of the table

as a delegate myself, it was a very edifying experience to be a member of the committee, to hear the community around the province talking to this bill.

It was especially educative because this is a bill that, as has been said, there was a large degree of consensus on already. So what we were hearing was a truly collaborative process, where people were coming to us and saying, "We agree with the direction this bill is going. We have a few comments that we think will make it better." One of the issues that a lot of people spoke to us about was the fundraising issue for community hospitals, the ability for community hospitals to tap into their grateful donor, their grateful patient banks by not having to get express consent. We heard that many times, and that amendment was made to the bill.

I think it was a really good process. It shows that when all parties can work together, that's the kind of good legislation we can produce. I think this government is going to be doing that as often as we can, presenting legislation that is well thought out, that we can work with all parties on.

**Mr Marchese:** Except Bill 8.

**Ms Wynne:** There are different processes, and Bill 8 is a different piece of legislation. I've already spoken to Bill 8. What we're talking about tonight is Bill 31. I think it is a really good example of collaborative process, and I commend the minister for putting it forward.

**Mr Dunlop:** I am pleased to rise this evening. It's not that often that we have a bit of a love-in with a bill, and I can tell you that it's not going to happen a lot of times here. There are some other medicare bills coming up that we have some concerns with. But I want to congratulate the minister for bringing it forward and my colleague Elizabeth Witmer, the former Minister of Health, for her comments this evening. She has presented a lot of really good points, and of course our party will be supporting this piece of legislation.

We understand that there are some financial issues with the implementation, and we look forward to those comments coming forward as well in the form of the budget from the Ministry of Health. We realize that with the Paul Martin budget, things aren't as well for the province of Ontario as we might have expected. We were all expecting billions of dollars more, but it didn't happen. We have to live with reality, and that is that he is going to continue with the Liberal government the same way he continued with our government. But anyhow, we are looking forward to further debate on this, further comments from all members of the Legislature.

**Mr Marchese:** The member for Nickel Belt.

**Mr Dunlop:** Yes, we are looking forward to Ms Martel's comments coming up. We know she has a lot of very positive issues with this bill. But we think that, overall, this piece of legislation is good for the province of Ontario and good for our health care system. We look forward to the debates this evening and for second and third reading as well. Thank you very much for this opportunity tonight.



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**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** First, I want to commend the minister for bringing the bill forward and for the work that he, the committee, all the people who did the work and particularly the deputants who came forward across the province did to make sure that we put together the best possible bill we could. I want to offer my congratulations to the former Minister of Health on her discussions about privacy.

The one thing I will bring up is a little thing that I did a while ago in a private member's bill, asking all of the Legislature to look into the ways in which it makes information available to those who don't have honourable intentions, not just within Bill 31. We pointed out some faults that we hoped the previous government would deal with, and that is the information stolen by biker gangs and organized crime. Literally, we saw examples of biker gangs putting pictures of police officers on their Web sites and saying, "You're watching us. Well, we're watching you." They would show pictures of their family, their house, their address, their telephone numbers. That is not acceptable in this Legislature any more.

We need to take steps. I think Bill 31 speaks to that in terms of what we are doing in health care and the information that should be made private and be concerned and considerate of the patients inside those hospitals. We'd better be doing that again across this Legislature in all ministries in the way we disseminate and make information available. I think this is the starting post.

I want to congratulate the former Minister of Health, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, for bringing forward her concerns. I want to talk about the NDP showing their support for this bill as well. I know they will make some recommendations that I believe will help us to make this a better bill yet. The Minister of Health will also be doing the same thing. As well, I want to challenge this Legislature; I want to challenge all members, not just the government but also the opposition side, to come up with ways to protect people's privacy, particularly from organized crime and biker gangs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Kitchener-Waterloo has two minutes to respond.

**Mrs Witmer:** I want to thank the member for Trinity-Spadina. I would concur with him that the member for Nickel Belt, Shelly Martel, has done an outstanding job, and continues to do so on behalf of their caucus, on health care issues. I want to thank the member from Don Valley West. We had the opportunity to sit together on the committee, and I certainly appreciated her comments during the deliberations. To my colleague from Simcoe North, who, I will tell you, has made an outstanding contribution in this House ever since they sent him here from—where was it? What's the name?

**Interjection:** Simcoe North.

**Mrs Witmer:** Simcoe North. That's right. But I was trying to find the name of that little place. Washago? What is it? Anyway, I appreciate the commitment he has shown. I know when he was a member, we were also able to introduce some dialysis services at one of his hos-

pitals as well. He has always demonstrated how passionate he is to improve access to quality services for the people in his community, and he has worked really hard. I want to thank the member for Brant, whom I've had the pleasure to work with for many years and who, I know from personal experience, is extremely committed to the people in the riding that he serves.

I think it is a great night, folks. I think we've worked hard together to get to a point where we have a bill that we are all reasonably happy with. I understand it will have some further consultation for those issues that still present concern to members of the public, the Health Care Providers' Association and others. There will be one more opportunity. So I think we can all be very proud of what we've done together.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Ms Martel:** It is a pleasure to participate in the debate tonight, and I will take the debate probably until the House closes at 9:30, so I will just let everyone know that now. As my colleague from Trinity-Spadina said, from the outset we supported this bill. But tonight I do want to talk a little bit about some of the concerns that we heard, which forced some change in terms of the clause-by-clause process, and some of the concerns that I still have, which I hope the government will seriously take into account as we move back into the committee process, because I assume that we will, and might at that time consider agreeing to some of the changes that I had proposed.

First of all, I should at the outset say it was a pleasure to be part of this committee. By and large, there was agreement. By and large, the people who came forward were in agreement with the bill. I want to say thanks to the bureaucratic staff, who were very helpful throughout the process and who contributed a lot of their time and their expertise, and also to the minister's political staff, and I see one of those staff sitting under the gallery now. He was very good to deal with. Thank you, Abid. I look forward to working with you in the future.

I know we won't see eye to eye on Bill 8. We've had discussions about that. But on this particular bill, I think we worked very hard to come forward with something that we can all agree with and something that we can all be proud of.

I do want to make mention of the former Minister of Health, because in fact it has taken us some long time to get here. The process around privacy legislation actually started in June 1996, under the former government. At that time, there was a consultation paper, which was entitled A Legal Framework for Health Information, that was released and resulted in a number of regional meetings and about 100 submissions to the government at the time.

That resulted, in November 1997, in a draft bill that was called the Personal Health Information Protection Act, which as well was released for public consultation. It went out to over 1,000 individuals and organizations. The overview itself went out to another 4,000 individuals and organizations. That bill didn't go any further.



It was then followed in October 2000 by another consultation paper, which was called Ontario's Proposed Personal Health Information Privacy Legislation for the Health Sector. That went to about 5,000 organizations. There were a number of round tables, and the ministry received written submissions.

That consultation paper led to a bill in December 2000 which was called the Personal Health Information Privacy Act, which did receive first reading. It went to a standing committee for public hearings but died on the order paper when the Legislature was prorogued in March 2001.

Finally, in February 2002, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services released draft legislation, the Privacy of Personal Information Act, and again, there was consultation. It didn't specifically deal with the health sector and again it didn't move forward, which then led us to the bill that we have been dealing with, Bill 31, which was introduced last fall.

So it has taken us some time to get to where we are, but I think as a result of all of that consultation, the draft documentation and the regional round tables the minister was able to come forward with a bill last fall where many of the issues that had been in dispute were worked out.

Secondly, the bill also, frankly, follows on a need to do something in response to the federal legislation, the privacy legislation that came forward and went into effect on January 1, 2004. As you'll know, that legislation primarily affects the commercial sector, and there were many who suggested we needed something much more specific for the health sector. So a number of other Legislatures, including Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta, have all moved forward with having their own health-specific privacy legislation, and Ontario's legislation follows in that regard.

So we are dealing with two things, one an initiative that began a long time ago in 1996 to deal with personal information. The need for that was reinforced, I think, by the federal legislation, but to have something more specific, because we heard throughout the process of the hearings that many provisions in the federal bill just did not apply to Ontario's health sector, were too onerous for Ontario health organizations to respond to. I'm pleased that we have a provincial bill that is patterned after some other provincial jurisdictions.

I won't go through the details of the bill in terms of what it does. I think that has already been well articulated by some of the other speakers here tonight. What I'd like to do is look at some of the concerns that we heard which resulted in change and some which didn't result in any change—for good reason, I think—and also some of the changes that I encourage the government to consider as we go through the process for second reading and as I assume we will go through clause-by-clause again.

Let me deal first with the changes around fundraising, which, it was clear as we started into this process, the government was going to have to respond to with an amendment that would allow for implied consent with respect to fundraising. Even on the first day of public

hearings, one of the first presentations that we heard was from the University Health Network. Mrs Witmer has talked a little bit about their fundraising numbers, but I think it's important that I repeat them.

#### 2100

Part of their concern, and their concern frankly was reflected and reinforced by other hospitals and other foundations that raise money for hospitals, was that if you had the requirement for express consent, which was in the original version of Bill 31, it would really be very onerous for hospitals to get that express consent. The net result would be a very significant drop in money raised through fundraising, money that is used by the hospitals, obviously, for research purposes but also for the purchase of capital equipment etc.

The University Health Network said in their presentation that an express consent requirement will limit the amount of time that care providers spend in patient consultations, because they would be expected to approach patients and try to get their express consent to send them fundraising letters after they'd left the hospital and their hospital stay had ended.

Secondly, an express consent requirement does not reflect the privacy expectations of University Health Network patients. They made it very clear that after many years of fundraising, they clearly have a track record and clearly have been able to record complaints. The level of complaints they had received with respect to their sending out fundraising letters and requesting funds just didn't, in their minds, necessitate changing from implicit consent to express consent of those patients.

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** One in 10,000.

**Ms Martel:** Actually, one in 20,000 was the figure that the University Health Network gave to us.

They also said that fundraising is critical to supporting desperately needed health care reforms. They referenced the Romanow recommendations in that regard. They said that in their case specifically, but with respect to hospitals generally, hospitals are relying increasingly on foundations to support research in communicable diseases and new infection control and prevention measures in a post-SARS world.

Their fundraising efforts were quite significant. We heard from a number of hospitals and received individual information about fundraising efforts, but UHN was quite significant: some \$62 million raised for hospital activities in 2003. That was from three foundations that had been established to support research efforts. They made it clear that despite all that, only one in 20,000 patients ever complained about actually being approached. So it was not a big problem, and they didn't really feel that express consent was required.

We heard the same, for example, in London. We had an excellent presentation there by London's four hospital foundations. They included the Children's Health Foundation, London Health Services Foundation, Parkwood Hospital Foundation and St Joseph's Health Care Foundation. Last year alone, those four foundations raised \$31.4 million, both for research and the purchase of



equipment and technology. They also made the point that some of the money that was being raised was going toward the local share of their reconstruction projects that had flowed as a result of orders from the Health Services Restructuring Commission. They were looking at finding \$100 million from fundraising to pay for the local share of the changes that had been ordered.

They made it very clear that their grateful patient program very much relied on being able to contact patients after they had left the hospital, talking to them about the wonderful services they had received when they were there and then making the specific pitch for a contribution. As a result of that first contribution, of course, many of those donors would give annually, and then many of those donors would actually put something in their wills in that regard. They told us that 14% of their patient donors indicated that their families had made a bequest averaging \$15,000, which is quite a significant amount of money.

It was also their concern that if they had to obtain express consent for fundraising, that would probably cut off about 90% of their donors. Their fundraising efforts would essentially dry up.

They gave us some figures to attach to that 90%. They said that on this basis in the first year, they would have \$1.2 million less in cash donations; in the fifth year, the lost cash donations would be in the order of about \$2.9 million; and the cumulative lost cash donations would be \$10.7 million. But based on historical patterns—and this was the most important point for the committee—the reduced level of contact with former patients would translate into a future loss of \$45 million in bequests from the same former patients. That was just the situation in London with respect to four foundations. We heard that again and again. If you translate that kind of loss across the province, the OHA estimated in their brief to us that it would cost Ontario annually about half a billion dollars. And who was going to make that up? Well, in the province of Ontario, the government was not going to be able to make that up. Where else would hospitals fundraise? They weren't going to be able to raise their parking fees internally or cut services to raise that. It was really essential that the government change its mind.

As a result of hearing that, and as a result of hearing from the privacy commissioner—the privacy commissioner came in and addressed a number of other issues, and also addressed the fundraising aspect of the bill in particular. She was really clear that in her opinion, implied consent for fundraising from patients was enough. I just want to quote from her brief what she said in this regard:

"Before concluding, I would like to touch on one other important change that I believe would enhance this bill. As currently drafted, health care institutions, such as hospitals, will require express consent in order to use personal health information for fundraising purposes. Although at first blush this may appear to be desirable from a privacy perspective, this does not reflect the existing realities facing healthcare organizations. These organiz-

ations are heavily dependent on fundraising to meet their goals and serve the public. Requiring express consent for fundraising purposes will adversely impact their ability to raise funds."

Between what we heard from the hospitals, the foundations and then the commissioner, it was very clear that the government was going to have to change to move from express consent to implied, in order not to seriously affect the ability of hospitals to raise money. All three parties put forward amendments during the clause-by-clause to give effect to that change. I was pleased that there was agreement to do that.

The second issue that I want to raise has to do with the lockbox provisions. We heard a great deal about this. There were two different sides to this matter. We heard, for example, from the Ontario Hospital Association, who said the following:

"On the issue of the lockbox, while we appreciate the need to ensure patients have an opportunity to control their health information, we feel it is important to alert government to how this may impact the quality of patient care in Ontario.

"For many health care practitioners working within hospitals, the right of individuals to effectively block access to what may be pertinent personal health information poses real challenges.

"Hospitals have told us that such a provision may, in some instances, impair the ability of a health care provider to disclose information for purposes that may be essential to the effective delivery of healthcare, and may thus inadvertently undermine the quality and safety of care to that individual."

That's what we heard from the OHA.

On the other hand, and we heard really compelling evidence from people who work in mental health services, for example, and people who work with patients who suffer from HIV/AIDS, who said very clearly that the release of some of their personal information could be devastating, much more for people who had other diseases which are, I guess the best way to describe it, not so controversial, or don't carry the stigma that those two do. They were very clear that these are patients' personal health records; patients should have the right to decide if they will refuse to disclose some of that information to other healthcare providers, physicians, institutions, hospitals etc and expect their wishes in that regard to be respected. So, very clearly on the other side was a concern that for some people the release of their personal health information, even done inadvertently, poses a much greater risk, a much greater challenge, than for other members of the general population. There are good reasons why many patients would want some of that information to be withheld.

At the end of the day, we asked the ministry staff what happens in other jurisdictions. The staff informed us that in dealing with Manitoba in this regard in particular, because they have similar provisions, government officials there who have had experience with these provisions made it clear that in their view there has not been a



breakdown in these provisions. There have not been instances where a patient's life, a patient's health care, was compromised by a physician or compromised in a hospital situation because not all of the personal health information of that patient had been disclosed. Manitoba officials said there were really no compelling reasons to change those provisions, the provisions that allowed people to refuse to disclose some of their personal health information. I think it was on that basis, on hearing that information, that the committee members felt much more comfortable about retaining those particular provisions in the bill. At some point this bill will be reviewed. That is written into the bill. I think we all felt very clearly that those lockbox provisions should be under intense scrutiny at that time, but what we heard about other jurisdictions gave us reason to believe that it will work in Ontario and that there's no compelling reason to change the legislation as it came forward in its original fashion.

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There are four concerns I want to raise that I hope the government will take into account as we deal with this process of clause-by-clause again. The first involves section 37(3). It's the section that talks about a health care facility providing information to a member of the general public who calls to ask for information about a patient in that facility. It says the following:

"(3) A health information custodian that is a facility that provides health care may disclose to a person the following personal health information relating to an individual who is a patient or a resident in the facility if the disclosure is not contrary to the express request of the individual:

"1. Confirmation that the individual is a patient or a resident in the facility.

"2. The individual's general health status described as critical, poor, fair, stable or satisfactory, or in terms indicating similar conditions.

"3. The location of the individual in the facility."

I remain concerned that, in a number of facilities, providing information about where a patient is located will immediately give information to a caller that that patient, for example, is in a mental health wing of an institution. Frankly, I think that is a disclosure that could be very hurtful or very harmful to a patient who, for example, may have not disclosed to his own family or friends, or her friends and family, that they actually have a mental illness. I think the evidence around that that was most compelling was provided to us by the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, which advocates for people who are in the psychiatric institutions in the province. They said the following:

"... section 37 is not appropriate in the mental health context. The provision allowing a facility to contact a relative or friend if the person him or herself is unable to consent where they are 'injured, incapacitated or ill' is far too broad a statement. Many persons with mental illness entering hospital may be in crisis and unable to immediately communicate their wishes regarding contact. That same person may feel very strongly that he or

she does not wish to have family involved due to embarrassment or other factors.

"Further, the ability to share information with those inquiring relating to whether or not the person is a patient, their general health status and location in the hospital is inappropriate. If the facility is a psychiatric hospital, informing someone that the person is a patient also discloses that the person is likely to have a mental illness. The person's general status could mean disclosing that the person is acutely ill and in four-point restraints. Location in a facility, when it is a general hospital could mean stating the person is being held on the psychiatric ward. Many persons with mental illness would not want this information shared, particularly if the inquirer were an employer, probation officer or a separated spouse involved in a custody dispute."

The organization, the office, then suggested to us that only in circumstances where it was an emergency, where the person is in the facility because of a life-threatening illness, should information about their condition, that they are indeed a patient and where they are located in that facility be released.

Similar concerns were expressed by the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Ontario division, with respect to this particular section. They, as well, essentially said that disclosure to a caller of the kind of information that is now in the amended bill should, frankly, not occur unless the patient is severely injured, is ill, or is incapacitated, and their life is at risk.

During the clause-by-clause I said to the committee that we should look at that type of disclosure only in the cases that have been outlined by the Canadian Mental Health Association and the patient advocate office. We were not able to come to an agreement about that. So the amendment or the clause that appears in the current bill continues to allow for a disclosure that I think is too excessive and that I think is unfair and unreasonable because clearly it will identify patients and illnesses that they themselves as patients may not have disclosed to their family and friends. In fact, it may be very harmful to them and may put them at risk.

As we go through the bill again, I encourage the government, the minister and his staff to take a look again at the sections and to take a look again at what was said to us by those two organizations in particular and to recognize that, for some people with some illnesses, we have to go the extra mile in terms of protecting their personal health information and their privacy. AIDS patients are one group; those suffering from mental illness are another. This is a clear case where I think the committee needs to look at this matter again and go the extra mile to ensure that we are only disclosing information to callers in the event that someone is incapacitated, severely ill or facing a life-threatening illness. I hope the government will consider making that change.

The second area where I hope the government will take another look has to do with section 72(11). This is a section that deals with the regulation-making process that the minister will establish in the bill. I commend the



government for having a regulation-making process that is going to be a public matter. For far too long under the former government, regulations were excessive in terms of their place in a number of bills. We got the framework, and the rest of the bill was dealt with by regulation. That regulation-making process went on behind closed doors, was dealt with at cabinet. There was no public consultation, public input and a chance for the public to see what was going on. I commend the government because the regulation-making process that exists in section 72 is quite an open process. The details with respect to that are listed. There will be a notice of the proposed regulation change in the Ontario Gazette. There will be other notices. There will be specific time periods that will be laid out where members of the public can make their concerns known, etc. That's all listed in section 72.

The concern that I have, because the minister is moving to a public process and I think that's a really good idea, is that at the end of the day there is clause 11, which says that if the minister makes a decision that a regulation will not be part of a public process—ie, it will just go to cabinet; there won't be notice and there won't be an ability for the public to participate—if the minister gets to that point with a regulation or a certain set of regulations, there is not any provision for a review of that, either by the Information and Privacy Commissioner or by a court. I find that a bit bizarre because the rest of the section allows for a very public process. It seems to me that if the minister and the ministry are confident about their public process around regulation-making they would not want to come forward with a provision that would allow for no review of those regulations that they decide to do without a public process. There may be very good reason to do that. The bill says that any regulation that is done in that manner will automatically be rescinded after two years, but I don't see why they want a provision that would not allow for a review.

I particularly don't understand that because the bill is going to be overseen by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I agree with that. That is similar to other legislation in other jurisdictions. It will be an independent third party, so to speak, who will have oversight for this bill. But this particular section even says that there will be no opportunity for a review by the minister not to have a public process around regulations, and that also extends to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the same commissioner who has an oversight function for the whole bill. I don't understand why every other provision of the bill would be a matter of oversight for the commissioner, but those regulations that the minister does not want to have a public process for will not also be allowed to be overseen by the commissioner.

To get the government out of this would be a much better position for the government to be in. If the process is working, then there should be no reason for the minister to worry about, or to fear, a review of a decision not to have a public process for some regulations. My concern is that it leaves the perception that the government or the minister has something to hide. I don't know

why you'd want that perception, because the rest of the process has been quite open. For everything else that has been good about this bill, it doesn't make much sense, and it's wrong, for the government to have a provision that would allow some parts of the regulation-making process not to be reviewed by either a court or the commissioner.

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I say to the government, I just think you should do yourselves a favour. You should ensure that even if the minister makes this decision, it is subject to review. If you are confident about your process, then the review will clearly show that the decision was correct. Do not have the provision that appears in section 11, which gives the appearance that you have something to hide. The bill has been agreed to, and I think you don't want to put yourself in that position. I hope the government will, as I proposed during the clause-by-clause, just rescind or delete that particular section.

Thirdly, we did hear, and Mrs Witmer referenced this, from a number of faith communities who did a joint presentation, which was much different from most of the other presentations we had heard. I think all of us appreciated the concerns they raised, because they were not concerns that I had thought about in the context of this bill. They came to make a presentation, and a number of their recommended changes were in fact dealt with in the clause-by-clause portion of the bill.

However, there is another concern that has not been dealt with, and I'd just like to reference that this evening in the hope that the government, when we deal with the bill again, will respond to the final concern that has come forward. The faith communities include the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, the Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Anglican Church of Canada. They say the following in this letter they wrote to committee members on February 27, after the committee hearing process was over:

"We ... spoke of the broader concerns we have that members of our churches, and of all faith communities, in provincial government-operated and -funded institutions have access to their clergy and spiritual care providers when they need them. We would not want to see the act that passes the House, unintentionally, become an obstacle to that same individual's desire and constitutional right to live out their freedom of religion....

"We believe that the first two of our concerns have been addressed in the bill.... We continue to have concerns, however, about the third point but think this can also be addressed with the addition of a section: 'Where an individual who is a resident or patient in a facility that is a health information custodian is in a life-threatening condition the health information custodian shall inform a representative of the individual's religious or other organization where that group is known by implication or otherwise.'"

The members of the faith community say:

"In asking for the inclusion of this amendment we recognize that we will also create an obligation on our-



selves to provide these institutions with the contact information that they will need, and that if we fail in responding to this it will be very clear that the responsibility for this failure lies with us and not with the institution. We have no doubt that we will be able to discuss and agree on" some "very simple procedures that will be needed to implement this with groups such as the Ontario Hospital Association and others."

The government went some long way in dealing with the first of the two concerns that had been raised with us by the faith communities, and I would encourage the government to respond in a positive way to the letter that was sent to us on February 27. The concerns they raised were very legitimate. I think that all members of the committee agreed with what was being said, and we should take the extra step and deal with the third concern they have raised, which is to ensure that a hospital, for example, or long-term-care facility will let a member of the clergy know if there is a patient in their hospital who is facing life-threatening circumstances. It will be up to the clergy, those particular churches, to make each hospital and each long-term-care facility aware of whom they can call in that event.

The final point I want to raise in the last minute has to do with the cost of implementation. We heard over and over again from many groups that while they support this legislation, it will be very costly for them as organizations to actually implement it. In hospitals, in long-term-care facilities and in doctors' offices it may very well require a change in computer technology that will be very expensive.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, for example, told us that many of their branches are so small that they don't even have computer technology, so they weren't sure how they were going to implement it. But they were certainly going to need some financial assistance from the government if the government wanted them to put this bill into effect in the way they do.

It's very clear to me that the government is going to have to come forward with some money for both technology and training if this bill is going to be implemented satisfactorily across the health sector. I hope that when we deal with this bill again, the minister will let us know how much money will be allocated.

That is the end of my remarks. It was a pleasure to participate in the committee. I hope we can make the other changes that will make this good bill even a bit better.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments?

**Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge):** I have certainly enjoyed the debate tonight, and the comments by the member from Nickel Belt in particular, as well as members from the official opposition, on Bill 31.

I had the opportunity for one day of the hearings to fill in for the member for Peterborough, who was busy with some constituency work on that particular day. I heard the comments of a number of the deputations and the concerns that were expressed then. I appreciated hearing from them about issues such as fundraising as a major

concern; how hospitals need the community funding and how Bill 31 would be debated in the context of allowing that to happen, and the co-operation from the members opposite from both parties in debating that matter with the government members such that the matter could move forward effectively.

The timing issue occurred during that debate and there was off-line discussion going on as well. Certainly, the extension of the timing for implementation into the beginning of 2005 will allow for an appropriate time frame for transition. I think it was recognized during the committee hearings that it would be difficult to bring the bill forward, have the necessary debate occur, actually get the bill through to the point of being approved and move forward, get royal assent and get regulations in place, and allow the appropriate time for the organizations that will have to deal with this matter to train those on their staff and put their own process in place, such that when the bill is enacted into law, it will result in an effective bill, to ensure the protection of the privacy of individuals in the province of Ontario as it relates to health care concerns. There is probably nothing worse that could happen than to have this bill move forward into legislation, in effect have it implemented, and have errors in early goings. Thus, the extension of time is an appropriate one.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment.

**Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):**

It was certainly a pleasure for me to sit with other members of this House on the standing committee on general government that was dealing with Bill 31. It was a new experience for me as well, and I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for guiding me through much of the process as we sat side by side through much of those hearings.

This bill has been a kind of work in progress through this government and previous governments. It appears that for the most part it has been gotten right after a few kicks at the cat, so to speak.

There were definitely many stakeholders who approached the committee to offer their viewpoints as to where they felt the bill was weak and where some improvements could be made. That was an opportunity for us to understand a little better just how the legislation that we enact in this House can have such an effect on the stakeholders and on the people they serve. It was good for me, personally, to be able to sit there and listen to people from hospital boards with respect to, for example, how this bill in its unamended form would have affected their ability to raise funds to support the foundations that allow them to operate their hospitals in such a tremendous fashion in this province. We were talking about a half a billion dollars in donated funds to these hospitals that would have been in jeopardy without the kinds of amendments that were put forward and brought to bear in this bill.

In essence, of course, our party is supporting the bill, amended as it is. We think that, while it's not perfect, it goes a long way to protecting the privacy of people in

Ontario with respect to health care, and also to respect the needs of the stakeholders.

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**Mr Marchese:** I want to thank the member from Nickel Belt and congratulate her for her thoughtful and thorough analysis, all the more remarkable because, again, we have been operating with just a couple of staff people, with one researcher. Remember, every minister has anywhere from 10 to 15 people, and the caucus has loads of researchers. We operate with one, two or three people. Hopefully we'll be able to hire a couple of more soon, but that's it.

That's why people like Shelley Martel from Nickel Belt need to be congratulated for the work that they do remarkably well. The suggestions she made for changes are practical, not complicated. If it took 10 years, literally close to 10 years, to bring a bill on this matter, if we don't consider some of the changes that Shelley Martel made today, it could take yet another 10 years to bring another bill to deal with some of the suggestions that have been made by Shelley Martel and others.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Dave Levac, are you OK?

**Mr Levac:** You're right.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, that's my worry: that if we agree on some of the things that she just spoke about, including the need to deal with the issue of the cost of implementation of this bill—because you remember, we used to attack the Tories all the time for introducing bills that were passed on to other levels—municipalities—and they have to pick up the tab. Not once has the minister or anyone else said, "There are costs. We will make sure that the money will flow so that organizations will not be burdened with the excessive costs that this could imply."

So I urge the minister and the government to reflect on that and reflect on some of the suggestions that can be made now, so we don't wait another 10 years to deal with these matters that have been dealt with today.

**Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** Having had the opportunity to sit on the general government committee and tour many communities in Ontario to get the very thoughtful insight from people who came forward at that particular time, to essentially build a piece of legislation that has brought together all parties in this House in common cause to produce a bill that I think is going to be very acceptable to the people of Ontario—I think it has broad-based support.

I want to say that personally I learned a great deal from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who had been a very distinguished minister in the previous government, and the insight that she brought to the table in this bill; and the member from Nickel Belt, who as a former minister in the Rae government has been through this legislation before, for bringing together the thoughts. The member from Northumberland made an enormous contribution in committee to improve that bill.

It's really an example, I think, that when an issue has common cause for the good of the community, all parties

can come together. For a newcomer to this House, it's very refreshing to see people from all parties come together on a bill like this and really listen to the community of Ontario.

I believe Ms Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, was with us in London, Ontario, when the lady came forward to talk to us about false memory syndrome. I'd never heard of it before in my life. So in terms of personal education through the committee work, it was a good opportunity to be on that committee, to travel through the province and really get an understanding of privacy legislation, what it's all about and how the Ontario legislation could be a signature piece of legislation for other provinces in this country that don't have similar legislation to follow our lead on.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to respond.

**Ms Martel:** I'll be brief. I want to thank all members for the comments that they made in response. Let me just focus on the implementation costs again. I think we have a good bill. I'm hoping that we can make some of the changes that I suggested and make it a bit better.

The thing that I remain very concerned about is, there has been no discussion whatsoever by the minister or the government about the costs to implement this. They are real, and we heard that during the course of the public hearings. We heard it from hospitals, we heard it from community health centres, we heard it as well from many community-based organizations, who made it clear that they don't even have the basic technologies right now, and if you are asking them to be in a position to implement this bill to ensure the security of information as it flows, security of information being held in their offices, there was going to have to be some money that was going to have to come from somewhere to make it happen.

I worry particularly about some of the small community-based organizations. I think the requirements here are going to become very onerous if the government is not in a position to put some money on the table to help make this happen; they really are.

We all know the consequence of the last number of years: that many community-based organizations—mental health, addictions in particular—haven't seen a funding increase in 10 years. They don't have money in their budgets to try to put together the computer systems that are going to be necessary for this legislation or to do the training of staff that will be necessary to ensure that their staff can comply. There are very serious penalties—and there should be—but what I don't want to see is an organization whose staff don't comply inadvertently because they weren't trained and didn't understand what their obligations and responsibilities were. That can happen if we don't put in place the money to make sure that both the training and the technology will be in place, in big institutions and small, to make sure that this bill works in the way we all want it to work.



I really encourage the government to take a serious second look at the costs here and how they will deal with the costs for these organizations.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I want to compliment all the members this evening for the spirit of co-operation in this

debate. It has been a pleasure to be in the chair. However, it is past 9:30 of the clock, and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, March 31, at 1:30 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 2136.*

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